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#50

BIG 50th

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

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CREDITS

COMICS INTERVIEW

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
editor/publisher

conceived by:
JIM SALICRUP
editorial and design consultant

MARK BORAX
managing editor

IRA LUFT
associate editor

ANDY MANGELS
contributing editor

M KAY McGONNELL
operations manager

SUSANNE COCKRELL
production manager

RICK JAGUS
JUDY DICKENS
type without gripe

BILL BLACK
BRUCE BRISTOW
JAMES FARMER
BOB GARCIA
CAROL KALISH
PEGGY MAY
ED O'NEAL
DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN
special thanks

THE GRIM PEEPER
(don't fear) the peeper

MARTIN W HERZOG
canadian correspondent

J R MATHER
international marketing director

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cover contributed by:
GEORGE PEREZ
art
BRIAN TALLEY
colors

ISSUE #50
(BUT WHO'S COUNTING)

Has it really been a baker's dozen years since **George Perez** came up to the Marvel Bullpen, an utter unknown, seeking his first assignment?

I remember it as clearly as if it were only yesterday: the excitement I felt upon seeing his artwork for the Man-Wolf story I was scripting; the innocent intrigue to wangle him regular work on the series (no fool, I!); the day he needed work desperately and, not yet having plotted the latest issue, I sketched out a four-page action sequence of Man-Wolf on a motorcycle in stick figures that George took home and turned into awesome art; his many early trials and tribulations and detractors; and his subsequent rocket rise as his talents became more apparent to one and all.

In INTERVIEW #35, X-THIEVES artist **Mark Propst** (whose work, like that of **Willie Peppers** on SOUTHERN KNIGHTS, gives me the same sense of excitement and potential I saw in the early Marvel art of **Perez** and **Byrne**) listed as his favorite artist: **"Perez,** of course."

It's the "of course" that got me.

The progression of time and perceptions is interesting. Today, George is well-established as a top talent in the comics industry — but, way back when, it would have taxed even George's own considerable imagination to have foreseen the full extent of his influence and stature now.

It couldn't have happened to a nicer, more enthusiastic or hard-working guy, and I'm glad to see such care and creativity rewarded.

And, just as I know George would have been blown away back in 1974 if he could have foreseen the future, so would I, if afforded a glimpse of where the twists and turns of time have taken me. The gap would have appeared too great to bridge, from scripting my first series for Marvel to publishing the 50th issue of a magazine called COMICS INTERVIEW (and my own ongoing comics group, with 1.09% of the direct sales market for August 1987).

And yet here it is: our big issue #50, celebrating none other than **George Perez!** The two of us are teamed again — albeit in a way neither could have predicted back in the good old days at Marvel.

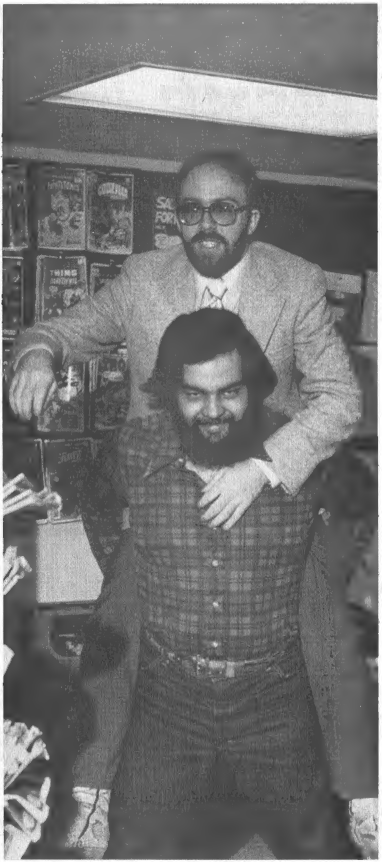
Fifty issues is a record. For me: my prior record was scripting or plotting 25 issues of THE DEFENDERS and 24 issues of SAVAGE SHE-HULK. For the industry: you can count on the fingers of one hand the magazines about comics that have lasted 50 issues. (It seems there's always some new periodical making promises that can't be kept to attract advertising from the comics industry — you'd think, by now, it should be obvious which magazines actually deliver the goods, year in and year out, but occasionally these things have to be pointed out.)

Another record: this is the largest issue of COMICS INTERVIEW yet, weighing in at a whopping 148 pages. And, I can tell you from editing the 220 page transcript, this is also the longest interview ever conducted for INTERVIEW, making it more of a book than a magazine.

Where will we be in the years to come? That's probably as hard to predict as it would have been for George and I to sit down and say, back in 1974, that we'd be here in COMICS INTERVIEW #50 today. But based on both our track records so far, we may surprise you. I can't speak for George, but when it comes to Comics Interview Publications — well, considering how far we've come, it's not impossible to imagine where we may go: to the top!

-David

Photo: Dwight Jon Zimmerman



George and DAK.

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"Dave Kraft was instrumental in getting me

GEORGE PEREZ

Well, here it is. The interview that was a year in the making! For myself, though, this interview has been ten years in the making.

As a young comics reader of nine, I remained fairly indiscriminate about comics. Just about any comic book would entertain me, though I always favored the DC heroes, especially Wonder Woman. The names and faces behind the making of my enjoyment remained blurred, with the exceptions of Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, and "Stan Lee Presents." But that summer, July of 1977, brought a comic that would literally change my life: FANTASTIC FOUR #184.

On the cover, the FF lay wounded among an incredible amount of rubble, while the towering metallic "Elliminator" stood above them. I was amazed at the stupendous detail on the cover, and looked at the signature: George Perez. The interior of the book was by him, too, and contained the same artistic excellence displayed on the cover.

Intense attraction to Perez's artwork led me, over the next seven years, to attempt to collect anything by him, and/or about him. When NEW TEEN TITANS #1 came out, even Superman could not have held me back. Not only was my idol drawing the book, but it was a revamping of my favorite childhood team!

In 1984, I decided it was time to finally meet George. I had only written him once (a letter he never received), before I departed for the San Diego Comic Convention. Realize, please, that a drive from Montana to San Diego is a long drive!

Since this was my first convention, I was awed by everything, but my heart skipped when I saw George Perez not ten feet away. My moment of truth was at hand.

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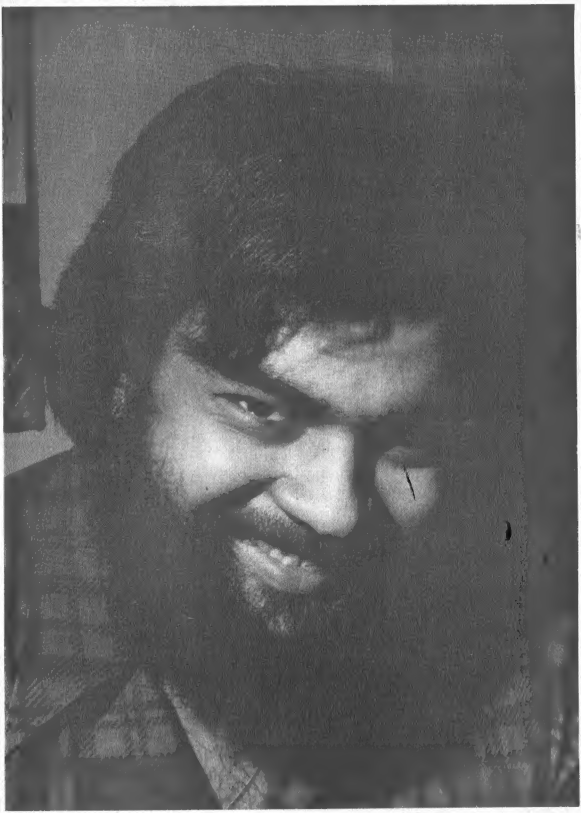
my first regular color comic assignment."



Photos: Dwight Jon Zimmerman

"I dropped 75 pounds & exercised &

"George? My name is Andy Mangels and I'm from Montana and I came here just to see you and I love your work and I've put together what I think is the complete collection of all your work ever published and I was wondering if you could look at it sometime?" My face was blue from lack of oxygen by the time I finished, but I had finally met him.

"Sure," he smiled. "How about now?" George proceeded to spend almost an hour with me, just going over the list. During the next three days of the Con, we talked quite a bit. And then it was over. He went back to New York, and I went back to Montana.

It was through a magazine article about APAs (amateur publishing associations) that I came in contact with Hank Kanalz. When he learned of my expertise on Perez, he put me in touch with Mike Mettler (then president of the Titan Talk APA), who was working on FOCUS ON GEORGE PEREZ for Fantagraphics.

Mike got me in touch with the editor, Tom Heintjes, who agreed to publish my checklist and a trivia page in the book. He didn't, however, allow me to interview George. It was then that I came upon the idea to do "THE" George Perez interview — an interview so all-inclusive that no one would have any questions left to ask. Despite all the fine interviewers who had spoken with him over the years, there were always questions left to ask.

Knowing AMAZING HEROES could not run an interview that size, I approached DAK about doing it for COMICS INTERVIEW. He accepted, and I went ahead with the arrangements. The main portion of the interview was done in August 1986 at the San Diego Comic Con. Three updates finished off the interview in January, February, and March of 1987. I would like to thank Hank Kanalz and Mike Mettler, without whom I would possibly not be working in the comics field today. Thanks also go to Rob Liefield, Mike Price, and Tony Wike, for supplying art from their collections. TITAN TALK and all of its members are also deserving of thanks for their help, inspiration, and questions. And thanks to DAK and Mark Borax for helping the dream come true.

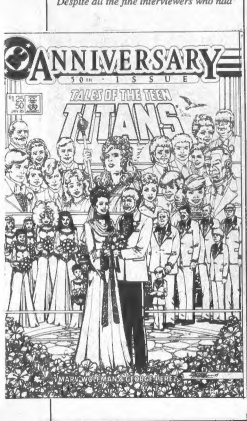
Final thanks, though, go to George Perez. From the first word he said to me, George was nothing other than polite or friendly. Intensely honest and open, George manages to charm his fans with more than his art. George loves what he does, and makes no bones about it. I am greatly pleased to be able to call George a friend.

Undeniably, I am a Perez fan, and possibly even a "fan-boy." As George notes, though, everybody is a fan of someone. In the "comic world" I can think of very few others worthy of the amount of respect George has garnered over the years.

Should anyone wish to communicate with me, please write care of COMICS INTERVIEW.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: George Perez
Residence: Jamaica Estates, New York
Born: June 9, 1954
Occupation: Commercial Cartoonist and Writer
Unrealized Ambition: To produce a work completely his own; i.e. pencilling, inking, writing, coloring and creating
Pet Peeve: Incompetence
Most Outstanding Achievement: A six year marriage, and the happiness involved
Biggest Regret: Never having learned to ride a bike
Time It Takes To Pencil An "Average Page": 6 hours
Hobbies: Dancing, Acting, Singing, and Exercising
Favorite Color: Icy Turquoise
Favorite Letter: "'S", because it's the only one they actually made a good symbol of for a super-hero."
Favorite Time of Day: Sleep time
Favorite Passtime: Still his wife
Favorite Singer/Band: Billy Joel
Favorite Drink: Caffeine Free Diet Coke
Favorite Person: His wife, then his mother
Least Favorite Passtime: Paying Bills
Least Favorite Vegetable: Spinach or Zucchinni
Least Favorite Comic Character: "I don't know. I'd like to draw everybody at least once!"
Favorite Comic Characters: Wonder Woman and the Metal Men
Favorite Quote: "Never take life seriously, because you're never going to get out of it alive."
Favorite Non-Comics Writer: Edgar Allen Poe
Favorite Non-Comics Artist: Norman Rockwell, Alphonse Mucha, Maxfield Parrish, and M.C. Escher
If He Could Have Any Super-Power It Would Be: "To be able to learn anything at a glance."
Favorite Interview Over Seven Hours: "Isn't that stacking the deck?"



ANDY MANGELS: *This is George Perez, the official interview.*
GEORGE PEREZ: George Perez *(Laughter.)*
ANDY: *George Pe'rez. Well, George, you've certainly changed a lot since I last saw you. Your huge imposing figure looked like Grizzly Adams two years ago. You've been...*
GEORGE: Basically dieting and exercising. I was diagnosed by my doctor as having diabetic tendencies because of my family history and, if I didn't do something, chances are I would become a very serious diabetic. So I dropped 75 pounds and exercised and dieted according to doctor's orders, and I am still a diabetic. I can't give blood is basically all I can't

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dieted, and I am still a diabetic."

Top: Carol Flynn, alias Phoenicia, the belly dancer. (Mrs. Perez)
Bottom: Carol, George and Julia Kapatelis Bundza. "Yes, that's the Julia from the WONDER WOMAN series—only younger than the character. She really does have a daughter named Vanessa. Unlike the book's Professor Kapatelis, Julia does have a living husband and a son."

"I was disenchanted; I wanted to be an

do. But I don't have to take insulin, I don't have to take medication because it was obesity-related, and dropping the weight was what I needed. I dropped from 275 to 200 pounds. And I'm wearing pants I have not worn since I was a teenager!

ANDY: *So now you're a—*

GEORGE: Yes, a slim imposing figure. The weightlifting keeps a lot of it on the shoulders.

ANDY: *This is an odd opening! The lady you've been with here at the convention — the San Diego Comic Convention — this year, is your wife; Carol. . .*

GEORGE: Carol Flynn, yes.

ANDY: *I've been wondering about certain characters who have been appearing in the comics, the female characters; one of them is Phoenicia Banu from TITANS #50 and the THUNDER AGENTS, and the other I asked you about last night, Carol Sladsky from TITANS #2 and #3. . .*

GEORGE: Which is a totally different character. She was the young lady I met on a cruise that I was seeing for awhile during the very early TITANS time. I didn't meet **Carol Flynn** until after I had drawn issue #8 of the TITANS. So there are two totally different people; coincidentally, their names are Carol. Phoenicia Banu, the designer in TITANS #50, and Phoenicia without the Banu in issue #1 and #2 of THUNDER AGENTS, obviously were based on my wife — and, in both cases, were actually drawn with my wife as model. There have been other characters I have drawn with my wife as influence, but these were made directly to look like my wife; they were named after my wife; and, since my wife is a belly dancer, the Phoenicia character in THUNDER AGENTS was the most like her as far as using physical representation. And since she designed the gowns for the wedding party in TALES OF TEEN TITANS #150, she appeared as Phoenicia Banu in the story and was credited as **Carol Flynn** in the credits.

ANDY: *So how did you get the "Banu"?*

GEORGE: Banu was her original dance name; she dropped it because it's a little clumsy sounding or too long. It literally means "Lady from Phoenicia," so she dropped "Banu" and became Phoenicia.

ANDY: *Well, how about revealing to me and the waiting world the true origin of George Perez? The classic story is you started drawing at age 5 on a clothes hamper by the toilet.*

GEORGE: Legend and fact are similar in this case. I drew a thing called Rubber-Band Man — it was a rubber band with the head of a man — it didn't look like much; the rubber band came out okay for a five-year-old. I had been reading comics almost a year at that point. And I was heavily influenced by a very early issue of DETECTIVE COMICS. It was the first comic I can recall picking up and reading, or trying to read at that point. And I just became fascinated with drawing. I'm the only artist in the family, and I come from a very, very large background. In my immediate family there are only four of us, but my mother's one of seven children, and my father is one of, I believe, close to ten. And cousins alone, I have close to 75.

ANDY: *What was your favorite comic when you were young?*

GEORGE: The really first favorite I had was LEGION OF SUPERHEROES. I loved the costumes, I loved Superboy, but then they were typically for kids at the time. I enjoyed the team books, and kept reading all the DCs until I got hooked on the FANTASTIC FOUR. Then my leanings went toward Marvel a lot stronger — with the exception of my teen years, when I was equally into both, 'cause DC was producing such great things as INFERIOR FIVE, HAWK AND DOVE, THE CREEPER. The LEGION was still going strong, and the JLA I always liked. Meanwhile, Marvel was going during their rich period with all the greats, **Kirby**, **Ditko**, **Heck**, producing the AVENGERS, those great AVENGERS; FANTASTIC FOUR; THOR, when **Jack** and **Vinnie Colletta** were really going strong on it; DOCTOR STRANGE with **Ditko**; SPIDER-MAN with **Ditko** and **Romita**. Those were the real, real strong days. I mean, both companies were just really strong then. DC started to slip and my attention went towards Marvel; I was so engrossed with them. That was a classic period. I regret that a lot of the younger fans never knew that period firsthand, when you really watched it grow, seeing exactly why Marvel has such a rabid audience now. It's based on what **Lee**, **Kirby**, **Ditko**, and all the others — even **Dick Ayers**, who was there

"DC was producing great things like THE CREEPER."

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artist — so I let my education slide."

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from the beginning — did to really make that company so exciting. And I'm glad that I grew up at that time, because it gave me a rich amount of material to strengthen my love and it determined my career.

ANDY: *As far as getting back to what you said earlier, some of the diverse characters you've created when you were younger were Rubber-Band Man, who you mentioned, Putty-Man, the Kleptomaniac Kid...*

GEORGE: Yeah. Putty-Man I don't recall as clearly. Kleptomaniac Kid, I heard the term used on a TV show, and I just thought, you know, "Wow, what a great sounding name." Kleptomaniac Kid. Again, you can tell I was really into the LEGION OF SUPERHEROES. You can tell by the names of the characters I was creating: Kleptomaniac Kid, Water Boy, Splash Girl — that was his girlfriend — there were a lot of those...

ANDY: *This was pre-Aqualad and Aquagirl?*

GEORGE: As far as I know it was pre-Aquagirl; I knew about Aqualad already existing at that point. But I was a very young boy. And Water Boy's actual ability was not being *in* water but turning *to* water, so he was not the same as Aqualad at all. And, of course, even groups. I had one group be The Alliance. The Powered Seven, they all had to be battery operated. *(Laughter.)* You know, they were all standard superhero stuff based on what I was enjoying as a child. I see a lot of fans doing the same thing I did. There's no way around it. When I look at some of the fans, there's no spark of doing something original, but then — neither was I, at that age! I just loved comics so much, I wanted to do what they were doing; so, of course, you don't become creative, you do what you love and you love what you read, so you copy. And that's exactly what I did. I never stopped drawing, since I was five years old.

ANDY: *Did any of those characters ever make it into your professional life?*

GEORGE: No. Visually, I may have used ideas as far as faces are concerned, as far as I could *draw* faces in those days...even then, I liked group relationships and characters interacting. But I can't think of any character offhand that I used from my old days as far as the design of characters. My sense of design hopefully improved as I got older.

ANDY: *Once you did get older, you were accepted in The New York School of Art and Design. You were still in high school, right?*

GEORGE: No, the School of Visual Arts. I believe it was Visual Arts; I lose track of which school that is.

ANDY: *Well, anyway, why didn't you go to that high school at the time?*

GEORGE: Actually, Visual Arts *was* a high school. I was trying for high school — it might have been Art and Design, now I can't remember. My mother is a Catholic, one of the most devout true Catholics I've ever known, and I have great respect for her belief even though I don't follow it myself. And she wanted me to go to a Catholic school. She was told that school had an art class, so at least I would get the best of both worlds: a Catholic education — plus, with an art class, I would feel happy about it. It turns out that freshman year Cardinal Hayes Memorial in New York ceased having art classes in the school. So I never did get any formal art training at all. I don't regret the training I had by going to a Catholic school; it was very strong on discipline, on integrity, ethics...although the religious aspect always bothered me and

"When I turned pro, my own obsession

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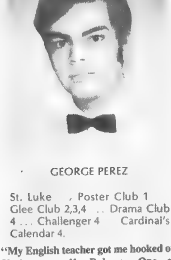


GEORGE PEREZ

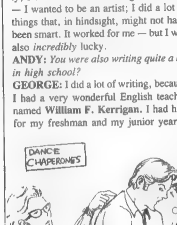
St. Luke . . . Poster Club 1 Glee Club 2,3,4 . . . Drama Club 4 . . . Challenger 4 Cardinal's Calendar 4.

"My English teacher got me hooked on Shakespeare." Below: One of George's myriad spot illos from his high school yearbook.

still does. But I did learn a lot of things about being responsible and of valuing a good education. I was a good student up until my last couple of years, when I'd slide only because of typical teenage rebelliousness. I was becoming disenchanted; I knew I wanted to be an artist and I couldn't think of anything else *but* being an artist. So I let my education slide. Art became so strong as the motive for my existence, at that point, that I couldn't be convinced that I could fail; that "what if I didn't make it as an artist?" Thankfully, I did succeed. I didn't go to college — I wanted to be an artist; I did a lot of things that, in hindsight, might not have been smart. It worked for me — but I was also *incredibly* lucky.

ANDY: *You were also writing quite a bit in high school?*

GEORGE: I did a lot of writing, because I had a very wonderful English teacher named **William F. Kerrigan**. I had him for my freshman and my junior year. I always admired him, still do, and he made English so interesting. He was a very, very good teacher. He did not take shortcuts. He was heavy on the homework and heavy on the different types of work he had you do — poetry, essay writing, creative writing, book reports, vocabulary — very, very strict. He had the entire program scheduled on a day-by-day basis. He had it all timed, so that he would always fit that amount of lesson in on that day. And as stern as he was, the one thing he did inspire in me is appreciation for creative writing, and for reading — he got me hooked on **Edgar Allan Poe** plus a few others like **Shakespeare**, which every teenager hates at that point, anyway. Because of **Mr. Kerrigan** I became interested not only in writing, but I did two or three short stories as extra credit, which sometimes would knock an 89 on my report card to a 96. He made me feel real good about my writing. He put nice critiques in there, mentioning stuff that he really liked about my work, plus constructive criticism without ever insulting my work. And, because of his natural way of handling a class — almost like giving a show — he got me interested in acting, too; I started doing school plays, as well, at the same time. I look back on **Mr. Kerrigan** with very fond memories. I doubt if he'll be reading this 'cause I doubt he reads comics, but I thank him for, for giving me that first real push into being creative.



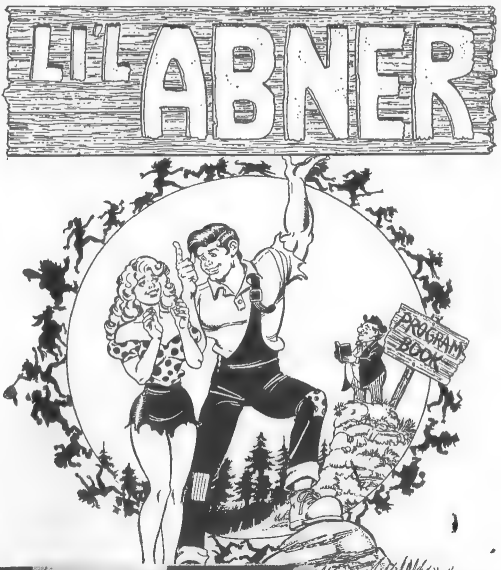
ANDY: *You've gone back to acting for community theater — you just finished up GUYS AND DOLLS, right?*

GEORGE: Yes, I was in the chorus of GUYS AND DOLLS, and I played a character called Rusty Charlie, plus I was a Cuban dancer; we do a lot of double duty in community theatre. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *And are you in a play now?*

GEORGE: Yeah. We're starting rehearsals for LI'L ABNER, the musical that was released in 1956 based on **Al Capp's** characters. My wife and I auditioned for it — the first time my wife's ever auditioned for a play and the first time we've ever done anything like this together. She's playing Moonbeam McSwine and I'm playing the title role. When I got the role, they didn't know my career — it's community theatre, but it isn't *my* community, I travel to get there — and they didn't realize the irony of giving a cartoon character to a cartoonist. So other artists can say they worked with **Capp**, or artists can say they've drawn LI'L ABNER — and, if I draw the program book, so will I — but I'll be the only artist who's also *played* Li'l Abner.

with it ripped my marriage apart."



Above: George's program book from LI'L ABNER, which he dedicated to Al Capp. "How many other artists get to *play* Abner as well as draw him?" Left: George in the title role, backstage with cast members Valerie Beaudry (slated to appear in WW as the New Silver Swan) and Maxine Sterenbuch.

"I was a fan-boy until I met Tom Sciacca."

If I had auditioned for it last year, the part I would have gotten would have been Earthquake McGoon. He's a good part, I love the part of Earthquake, he'd be someone who was heavy, looking like a bear. If I got that role and not Abner, I would have been disappointed but I would have accepted it; I love the Abner role, but there are a lot of great parts, like the Earthquake role.

ANDY: *This is community theatre?*

GEORGE: Yes, the Free Synagogue of Flushing in Flushing, New York.

ANDY: *So is the next stop off-Broadway?*

GEORGE: No...I would never want anything out of acting other than my own enjoyment and being with my friends. I never would want a career; the comics are my career and that's where I shine, that's what I enjoy, that's what pays the bills.

ANDY: *Well, getting back to your high school, you met your first wife, Yvette Olmeda*, there. Was she real supportive of your ambitions?

GEORGE: Oh, yes. The one thing I can say in the case of Yvette, and moreso with Carol, is that I never had trouble as far as the supportiveness. With Yvette, one of the main things is that we married way too young — we weren't ready — and a lot of the stuff that happened when I did turn pro, my own obsession with it, ripped the marriage apart. We were both immature, there was a lot of things that she wanted that I couldn't provide, a lot of things I wanted *she* couldn't provide, and we really didn't realize that at the time. And it became impossible to satisfy each other's needs after awhile, even on basic levels of just being able to communicate. So it didn't work out. When we divorced, it was a rough time for both of us, and it was a rough time in my career. My career suffered for it, it was a time I'd call my "burnout period," wherein I stopped suddenly doing all the books I was doing — I was not even managing a book a month, at that point — and I ballooned up to about 300 pounds. So it was a very, very bad time. After I came back, I started working for Marvel, then doing the work with the TEEN TITANS, and my career really started going back on the track again. I met my current wife, Carol, when I was doing about issue # 8, as I mentioned before. And when we got married, it was like being careful — I had a lot of bad memories from the first marriage that I didn't want to repeat, and it's her second marriage so she wanted to be sure. And in the more than five years we have been married now, it's worked beautifully. She's my number one fan bar none, no matter what any fan says; *(Andy pouts. Laughter.)* Without her, I would not be in the position I am now either financially, psychologically, or physically, because she helped me with the weight loss. And if there's anyone who's responsible for my career — other than myself — it's my wife, Carol. She's the one person who makes it all both worthwhile and bearable when it gets really tough. I work at home, so we're together 24 hours a day.

ANDY: *A happy marriage...*

GEORGE: Very. A lot of the happiness in the TEEN TITANS, the very *familial* type of atmosphere that came up in the TITANS that people noted, that "family feeling," was based on the life I was having with Carol. I was starting to show that more in my artwork. People smiled more, people interacted more lovingly, touching more, because my marriage was going so well it couldn't help but manifest itself in my art.

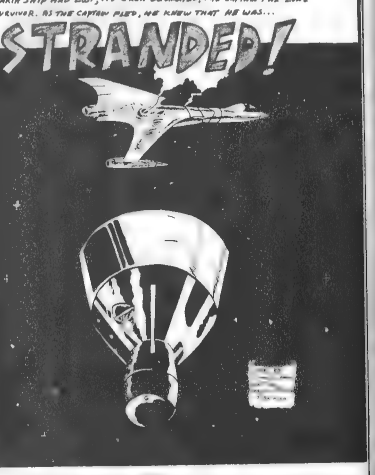
ANDY: *That's great. Now, also about the time you met Yvie the first time, you also met Tom Sciacca...*

GEORGE: I'd say Tom predated Yvie; I met Tom my freshman year in high school. Tom and I were high school students together in Cardinal Hayes and he took me to my first comics convention. He wanted to be a comic-book artist. At this point, he's actually working in film, doing the publicity and doing some promotional work. But at first he wanted to be a comic-book artist, and he was the first person I actually met who had the same idea I had. At that point, I was a comic-book fanatic. I loved the comics, I loved to draw the characters; a career, I really didn't think of it as much, until I met Tom.

ANDY: *You were a fan-boy, George!*

GEORGE: That's it, I was a fan-boy, until I met Tom. He took me to my first convention, showed me fanzines, taught me about ways you can show your work. Of

"Tom and I did a story called 'Stranded!' It was *terrible*! But it was our first printed work."


THE GREAT BATTLE IN SPACE HAD BEEN FOUGHT, AND THE EARTH SHIP HAD LOST, ITS CREW DECIMATED, THE CAPTAIN THE LONE SURVIVOR. AS THE CAPTAIN PIED, HE KNEW THAT HE WAS...
STRANDED!

© 1987 Perez and Sciacca

"Neal Adams is blunt, very intimidating."

course, neither having professional training, we both met professionals and got the nice polite "thank you but no thank you." I met first **Sal Quartuccio** of Sal Q Productions — although it wasn't Sal Q Productions at the time — at a convention, who in turn introduced me to others who were producing fanzine work. **Jim Glenn** and **Pat O'Neill**, who now freelances for Marvel, STARLOG and COMICS INTERVIEW, were producing a fanzine called FACTORS UNKNOWN, and they gave me my first opportunity to have comic-book work printed. It was terrible! Tom and I did a story together, called STRANDED. Tom did the story and the first page; I did the pencils of the last three pages, and Tom inked the rest. It was *terrible*! I mean, I was a bad penciller, Tom was a lousy inker, Tom lettered himself and he couldn't write his own name . . . it was *terrible*! But it was our first printed work; like, *my* first printed work, and I got hooked, seeing it, and showing it off in school, even though they had a print run of about 250. I was showing it off, looking at it, bringing it to my classmates . . . these kids weren't artists, they'd say, "Oh, great!" But I was hooked from that point on.

Above: Original design for interior cover page to HOT SHOT #1, featuring the She Devils. Unpublished. Below: Unpublished splash page from "Death Squad."

ANDY: *So you did FACTORS UNKNOWN #2 and #3, right?*

GEORGE: #3 had a much more Perez-like story 'cause I had a full story that I wrote, pencilled, inked, and lettered. And I was only a fair penciller, a fair writer, lousy inker and lousy letterer. It was a team book called THE DEATH SQUAD. It got me used to continuity and character interrelation — of course, in hindsight, very childish in attitude and very male-fantasy oriented. Young, juvenile male fantasy. But, again, it was a vast improvement over the story before. And as long as I could keep improving, that was the thing I needed. I needed the hands-on practice, and that's what those fanzines were providing me.

ANDY: *You were mentioning you got criticism from the pros at your first convention. Who gave you your first criticism?*

GEORGE: The first criticism I can remember, that nearly devastated me, was from **Neal Adams**. 'Cause Neal is blunt, up front, very intimidating. A real pussycat deep down, he is a man that because of his reputation — and particularly his reputation at the time — is a little hard to know, but he really does want people to succeed. After I became a pro, and I met Neal at a convention, there was no man I've ever met who was as happy to see me succeed as Neal was. Neal remembered me, remembered the criticism, and **Dick Giordano** was also there that day, and Neal comes off as the rough, tough guy, while Dick comes off as a pussycat. But Neal remembered my work and was really happy that I succeeded. I took a lot of the stuff he told me — as a child, which I was — I took a lot of criticism harshly, and didn't know what to do with it. A lot of technical terms he used, I didn't know what the hell he meant. *(Laughter.)* But a lot of the stuff.

OH, NO! JEEZ! I BETTER HELP HIM OR HE NEVER GET TO MARRY HIS CAR AGAIN!
OHNO HAH!
ULP!
JEEZ
PLEASE O GREAT HAH-HA MIGHT NO HARM TO START A RIOT! PLEASE RUSS!

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"I did a wet-dreams-type storyline."

in hindsight, I utilized later, sometimes subconsciously. And Neal was the very first harsh professional criticism I ever received, and I was devastated. I'd be devastated every other time I got criticism, including after I turned pro. **Marv Wolfman** was also a harsh critic of my work. I was trying things I wasn't equipped to do, wanted to do, but didn't know how. And because of that, that was better than any art training I could have had. **Marie Severin**, among others, also helped. I got all this hands-on art training for nothing! These folks gave me, as far as my career is concerned, at least a million dollars worth of advice — for nothing. And I thank them all for my career; they've done a lot to make me **George Perez**, the artist. Once I got rid of **George Perez**, the proud, young, upstart — as in young artists who're so into drawing that they can't accept the fact that they still have to learn.

ANDY: *So you feel, in hindsight, that what they said to you was probably true?*

GEORGE: There were times when some of them might have been unduly harsh, because they may have been tired, they may not have wanted to see any work at the time, or they see so much new work that I was just one of many in the crowd, and they couldn't afford to keep spending the time. For the most part, after I assimilated, separated what was mood from what was actual critique, yes, everything they said was of great help. I try to temper my criticism of young artists when they're showing their work, try to be fair. There are times when I know that I'm talking to them, and they're saying, "What the hell does he know?" They want an opinion from someone who'll tell them what they want to hear. I did the same thing.

ANDY: *Did you do a lot of other fanzine work?*

GEORGE: Actually, not that much. I did, beyond FACTORS UNKNOWN, three fanzines, really.

ANDY: *You did CONJURE, which —*

GEORGE: CONJURE and HOT STUFF and HOT SHOT. That was it, basically. I did bits and pieces, but those were the only full stories in fanzine work. And CONJURE I did as a favor to **Tom Sciacca**, it was his book, he printed it and I did a back-up story plus I did the covers. The front cover was reproduced from pencil, the back cover was pen and ink. I wasn't equipped to do pen and ink at that time; then again, penciling was also a debatable point. Some of that stuff still holds up nicely, you know, considering my age and my experience. And HOT

EXCELLENT EXPLANATION! VERY INFORMATIVE! REFERENCE SHOULD PROVE A VALUABLE ASSET
WELL, SO MUCH FOR MY INITIATION! NOW TO DUST SIDE MY TIME
AND BACK AT THE WAREHOUSE, ONE OF OUR S.A.W. AGENTS INDULGES IN SOME OF HER OWN ENTERTAINMENT.
WELL, SUIT, HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS? WHY NILL YOU WHEN I CAN GET SUCH EXQUISITE PLEASURE FROM WATCHING YOU BLEED!
SUREAM WHIMPER, PLEAD FOR MERCY! HA, HA!

"I did the writing and pencilling on a juvenile fantasy fighting bimbos type story called 'The She Devils.'"

STUFF and HOT SHOT. .HOT STUFF was done as a favor to **Sal Quartucchio**, it was sort of an inside joke story, and HOT SHOT was for **Jim Glenn** from FACTORS UNKNOWN, wherein I did the writing and pencilling on a juvenile fantasy fighting bimbos type story called "The She Devils."

ANDY: *A pre-CHARLIE'S ANGELS concept . . .*

GEORGE: A little more raunchy than CHARLIE'S ANGELS ever was. This was strictly T & A. Like I said, I was a teenage boy; I still look at these type of stories fondly, I did a wet dreams-type of storyline and the story was so juvenile I wrote it all in one day! The entire script was done in one day! Like; we're not talking WAR AND PEACE here. This was definitely a fan project, but I liked it. It was fun. I still see people coming up to have those things autographed from time to time. We all have to start somewhere. I have no shame regarding that. Interesting that a man who did such an obvious female-as-sex-object story is now doing WONDER WOMAN with a noticeably feminist slant.

ANDY: *Right . . .*

GEORGE: I appreciate a lovely woman,

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"In high school I did a very pre-

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splatter movie type of splatter story."

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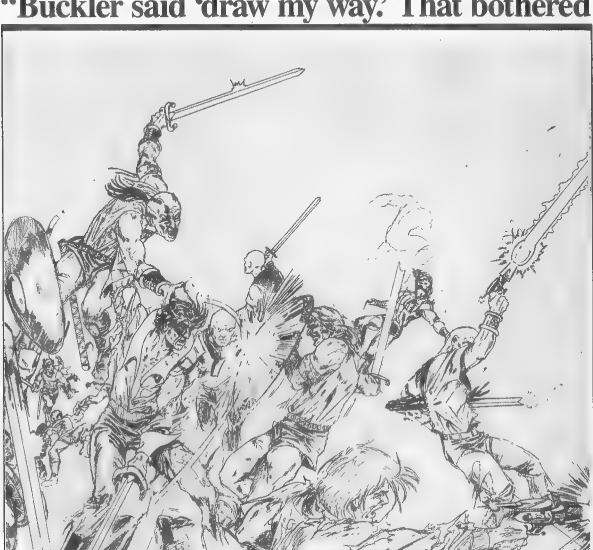
TERROR TRAIN, "an intense story about a subway train that made a stop in hell."

but I am also a lot more sensible about what a woman *is* than I was then. And I was just a kid, I wanted to get rocks off...

ANDY: *So you were planning on continuing HOT SHOTS as well as a couple of other things?*

GEORGE: Oh, everything. I was in every fan project, you always go into it planning, "Boy this is going to be a big series," and all that. You know full well what happens — the first issue, that's the end of it. Sales didn't warrant it, who's going to be buying a book from a total unknown? And as in most fanzines then and now — although the term "fan publishing" is probably a better term nowadays — in order to break even on their production costs, because of their low

"Buckler said 'draw my way.' That bothered



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print run, their prices are higher than the mainstream comics, so right away you have a few strikes against you. We were no different. We had one issue that came out. Now I'm always amazed at how many of these alternative shoestring publications pass more than one issue, particularly those that catch on — those that are of just enough professional calibre to keep going until they become professional calibre. Those are always fun , the TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES are the most recent, starting off originally as a parody. CEREBUS was a parody, a classic example of independent shoestring production working into a major league book for its creator. And it was no different then, it's just that the market wasn't right. The direct sales market hadn't become quite as strong as it is now.

ANDY: *So what happened then? You were going to do a DEATH SQUAD series with Bob Layton and you started on a graphic novel called DEATH TRAIN?*

GEORGE: TERROR TRAIN. Actually, TERROR TRAIN was a short I wrote when I was in high school. I can no longer

me and caused a break in our relations."

find the original manuscript. A very pre-splatter movie type of splatter story. It was done very much in that type of style way before any splatter movies ever showed; I didn't know about **Herschel** or **Lewis** at the time.

ANDY: *You didn't know GORE GORE GIRLS?*

GEORGE: I had no idea about those films. And I did a very strong, intense story about a subway train that made a stop in hell. I wanted to put that into story form. I did one page of it — I didn't know anything about perspective, although I could draw a damn good train — and it never went anywhere. I would not do the story now because it would come off like a splatter story, and a lot of the things that I thought were innovative, I've seen done since. As for DEATH SQUAD, I was already a pro at that point, and I was doing an origins story of the DEATH SQUAD with **Bob Layton** for Omnibus Publishing, which produced the PEREZ, ACCENT ON THE FIRST E book. But Omnibus never went anywhere; the PEREZ book itself, due to bad management, bad marketing, bad timing, didn't go anywhere — I assume only about 600 ever went out to any audience; it's a very rare book now. So DEATH SQUAD totally fell apart.

ANDY: *When you graduated from high school, you went immediately to comics, and then Neal Adams' Continuity Studios, and then you finally met Rich Buckler, and became his assistant. Tell us about your work with Rich.*

GEORGE: Rich, in hindsight — again, a lot of this stuff I always seem to not feel at the time, but I notice it later — taught me a few things that are basic to comic-book stories, particularly construction of characters on a page. How to make the background not interfere with the foreground character by having perpendiculars; he learned this from **Kirby** and in turn was showing it to me. A little bit about perspective, not clearly enough that I understood. Rich was going through his **Kirby** period at that time, so a lot of the **Kirby** references that he had were piled up — he was using actual panels of **Jack Kirby** work when he was drawing FANTASTIC FOUR. And despite my great love for **Jack Kirby's** work, I didn't want to be another **Jack Kirby**. So that was a negative there. It was a learning time but it was an unhappy time, because as much as I was starting to learn some of the basics of storytelling, I didn't feel like I was doing anything in actual drawing. From time to time he showed me some ways of actual drawing, but Rich had a schedule to meet. He was looking at me as an assistant, not as a student. He had the right to say "draw my way." So that bothered me after awhile, and it caused a break in our relationship. But because of my working with **Rich Buckler**, people at Marvel got to know me, and when there were assignments that *nobody* wanted to draw, you know, they said, "See if **George Perez** will do it. At least he's proven that he's willing to work."

And I finally got the MAN-WOLF, thanks to a recommendation from, I believe, **Jim Salicrup**, to **Rich Buckler**, and then the SONS OF THE TIGER. What I lacked in professional finesse I made up for in enthusiasm.

ANDY: *We'll get to that in a minute, but back to your work with Rich — you layed out some stories for him that were uncredited, a lot of stories...*

GEORGE: Oh, sure. But that was...

ANDY: *Do you remember any specific ones?*

GEORGE: Uhhh, I wish I could name the titles. There was a MORBIUS story that had something to do with a lighthouse — for, I believe, MONSTERS UNLEASHED. There were others... an issue of WAR OF THE WORLDS that he did. I helped him out with some layouts there Again, very much following what Rich was asking me to do. And an issue of the FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL with the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. And various issues of FANTASTIC FOUR. I don't think I ever helped him with THOR — and much to my regret — because it was his baby, and he worked with people he knew a lot longer. I never, ever worked with him on DEATHLOK, with the exception of him allowing me to do a cartoon piece in the back of the first issue, of the 25th issue of ASTONISHING TALES which introduced DEATHLOK. He let me do the little cartoon in the background showing him and **Doug**

DEATH SQUAD

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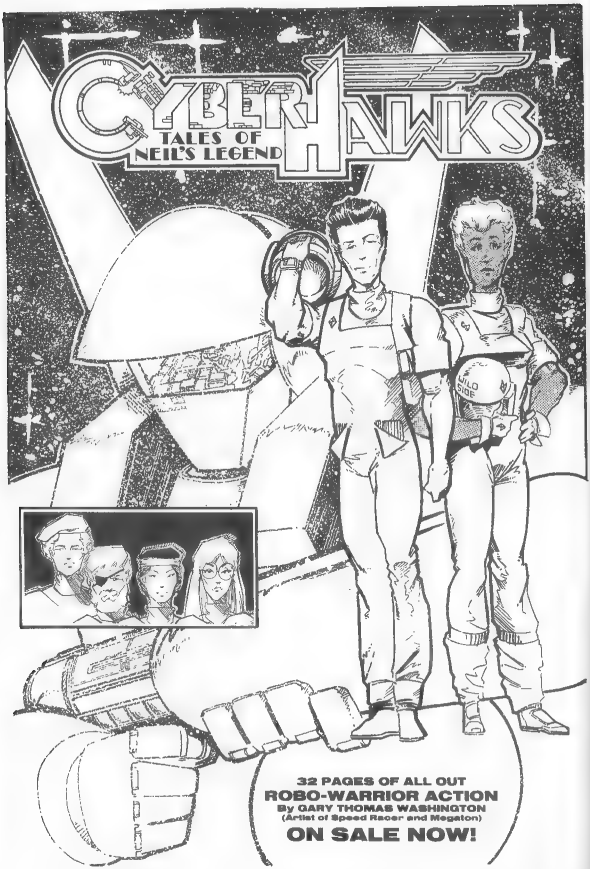
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"Byrne and I go back a long way."

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Moench, who I had not met at the time, so I was just drawing the back of his head; that ended up being my very, very first professional printed comic work. The DEATHLOK figure at the end was indicated by me, but that was pencilled by Rich. That was his character. My one regret is that he never allowed me to help him out on DEATHLOK. That was his baby, he wanted that to be as much pure **Buckler** as possible. Since I've never worked with an assistant, I can understand being that possessive of a character.

ANDY: *The first story you did with Rich Buckler — the infamous "Gulliver Jones" story in MONSTERS UNLEASHED #8 — You have said that this is one of your two worst stories ever. What happened with that?*

GEORGE: Originally, it was supposed to be drawn by **Rich Buckler**, with me assisting him. As it turned out, because of Rich's schedule, I got tossed in the lion's den very, very early. And there was no . . . Rich only did the first couple of pages, and it was almost totally left to me. And I wasn't ready for it — plus, I had to get it done fast. Because of a lot of confusion, we also lost the inker who was scheduled to do it. He would have at least fixed up some of the work that I did. **Pablo Marcos**, I think, was working on DEATHLOK at the time. So with Rich and Pablo gone, that left it to me and an inker who had to ink it practically overnight, the late **Duffy Vohland**. And needless to say, it was a horrible piece of work. *But*, it was the best I could do at the time. Other people helped out — Duffy was a friend of a lot of people, so they helped him out with some of the background figures, and two of those people were **Bob Layton** and **John Byrne** — so actually **Byrne** and I go back a long way; he did some of the background inking and some of the characters of my very first full story. So John and I have worked together . . .

ANDY: *This was also his first story?*

GEORGE: He was doing some fan stuff at the time — I don't know if he was doing the stuff with Charlton — but either way he was still not a known name. "Gulliver on Mars" not only marks my first full story, but it also marked the first time that **John Byrne** and **George Perez** ever appeared together in a story. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Well, after the Gulliver Jones disaster, you got your first color comics break pencilling CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #33, the MAN-WOLF feature by David Kraft, who is of course editing this interview . . .*

AND EVEN HIS SHIELD HAS FEATHERS TOO!
ERE I SAID BEFORE, CHAK HIT IT RIGHT ON THE BUTTON!
--FREE
--WHILE MY HANDS BABBED...
AND BOTH ACTIONS CLEARED THE WAY FOR THE HERO TO ENTER AND CHAK...
THEN PHISTOL IS TOSS TO FACE THE THUNDERBIRD WAS SORRY I DID
IT DIDN'T TOOK MUCH BETTER IN CLOSEUP, I WAS REMINDED OF RONG LEADING LADIES WHO INSISTED ON SMEARING THE CAMERA LENS WITH VASELINE TO SMOOTHER THEIR WRINKLES IN A MATE... AND IT OCCURED TO ME THAT NOTHING SHORT OF TAR WOULD HELP THIS DUO...
THEN SOMETHING ELSE OCCURED TO ME... THE THINGS EXCESSIVE MUD MADE IT TOP-HEA VY, SO THOUGH THE BOWSPRIT'S GUN CRADLE'S A GOOD BARGE AND LITTLE ELSE

Gulliver on Mars, the first "John Byrne-George Perez collaboration." From 1974.

GEORGE: Well, the first issue was actually *plotted* by **Tony Isabella**, and scripted by Dave, and then Dave took the plotting over as of the next issue — totally changing the direction as to where the story was going at that point. I did the first issue, just as a fill-in, and Dave liked my storytelling enough that he managed to talk Marvel into allowing me to *do* the strip. So Dave was instrumental in getting me my first regular color comic assignment. I did MAN-WOLF first and then getting SONS OF THE TIGER was based on my work on MAN-WOLF. Anyway, Dave was interested in my work and wanted me as a regular. What I lacked in finesse at drawing I made up for in sheer enthusiasm and wanting to do the best work, and being innovative. And Dave was new, too, so he was trying things that maybe another writer would not have been as prone to try, because he wanted to make a mark.

ANDY: *You picked up, as you mentioned, THE DEADLY HANDS OF KUNG FU, the SONS OF THE TIGER strip in there . . .*

GEORGE: As of issue #6, right.

ANDY: *. . . and you worked with Marv, as you mentioned before. What went on there between you and Marv?*

GEORGE: Well, Marv used to teach art, as well, so he had an art background. And . . . he was brutal. Marv has never

"It was Bill Mantlo who wanted to create

Jack of Hearts.

claimed to be Mr. Subtle as far as criticism. *(Laughter.)*

And Marv, obviously, had the right as editor to say, "No, you can't do this," or "You're doing this wrong." And he did. I was trying down-shots, and I didn't know enough about perspective to make it work. Particularly, how perspective affects the human body. I didn't know enough about anatomy to make that work. Didn't know enough about facial expressions. And, something that Marv noted, I really didn't know how to handle backgrounds. I tended not to draw establishing shots to make clear where the characters were, and I tended to have my backgrounds very sparse. I didn't have very many backgrounds. I still had that fan pride there, so I was very ticked off at Marv, 'cause I thought he was having a personal vendetta against me by doing that. But again, almost like, to show Marv up, I kept trying, and I said, "If I'm bad at this, let me see if I can work on it." Proving he's wrong by changing my work, thus proving he's right! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *You proved him wrong on your perspective when you did the famous splash page on WHITE TIGER...*

GEORGE: Again, not proving him wrong, because I proved to him that I could do it — but I proved him right, in that I had to *learn* in order that I could do it. 'Cause if he hadn't said that I didn't do perspective correctly, then I would never have done it correctly. By him saying I didn't do it correctly, it forced me to say, "Yes, I can." Thus I learned how to do it, thus proving that he was right I didn't know it, but I *can* learn! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *That still stands as an incredible piece of perspective work.*

GEORGE: I remember inker **Jack Abel** commenting, coming in and saying, "You know how long this took me to ink?" and he gave me this certain amount of time, and I said, "Well, it took me *this* long to pencil." And he said, "Oh." Obviously, it took me longer than it took him. I had to plan it!

ANDY: *Well, you created the White Tiger character...*

GEORGE: With **Bill Mantlo**, yes.

ANDY: *...and he was the first Puerto Rican superhero.*

GEORGE: Well, interestingly enough, it was **Bill Mantlo** who wanted to create the first Puerto Rican superhero. Whether it was because he was working with a Puerto Rican artist at the time — there were only two of us in comics, myself and **Ernie Colon** — whether that was the impetus or Bill's social conscience, he wanted to create a Puerto Rican hero. And we came up with the concept of the White Tiger. I came up with the name, mostly 'cause I knew more names — I didn't want the standard "Paco" or "Chino" or that type of name. "Hector Hayaba." Give him a *real* name like people that I know! *(Laughter.)* You know, my name is not "Juanito Perez," it's **George Perez**. And my father is "Jorge," not "Jorgeito." Suddenly getting rid of the lead characters of the strip and replacing them with another, was something that was innovative at the time. And with my then wife Yvie handling the Spanish — my Spanish was not good enough to write as it is now — we ended up with a character who ended up being quite popular. Unfortunately, after the introduction of White Tiger, I left SONS OF THE TIGER after three issues, so I never saw...the character never reached what I thought would be its logical point, because I was never there to kibbitz with Bill about the character. From that point on, Bill was on his own, and he had his own vision. That ended my association with White Tiger, except when I came back on issue #30, which I did with inker **Sonny Trinidad**.

I'll tell you, his name sounds like a travel poster. And that was my one last shot at the White Tiger. What happened to White Tiger afterwards, I didn't read, but I've been told it was a shame for the character. But as a character, he definitely had a lot more integrity as a Puerto Rican superhero than the more recent Vibe had or ever will. *(Laughter.)*

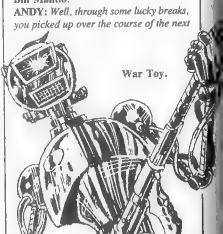
ANDY: *Well, you also created, at almost the same time as the White Tiger, the look for the "most-hated-to-draw" Marvel hero, Jack of Hearts, right?*

GEORGE: No, no! A false credit. There are two characters that I'm often given credit for that I did not do *anything* to design. "War Toy" was a series that I did a little later for the UNKNOWN WORLDS OF SCIENCE FICTION. It's credited as designed by me, but it's a **Mike Kaluta** drawing. **Mike Kaluta** did War Toy. And Jack of Hearts was designed by **Keith Giffen**. He pencilled the issue after I left on the SONS OF THE TIGER. He designed Jack of Hearts. I drew him in issue #30, and **Jim Sherman** and others drew Jack of Hearts, but Jack of Hearts was designed by **Keith Giffen**. His costume has since been simplified from Keith's original drawing.

ANDY: *It seems surprising, it looks like such a Perez costume.*

GEORGE: Yes, well, Keith was going through his much more complex period; his work has changed radically since then. But Jack of Hearts was designed visually by Keith, with ideas and suggestions by **Bill Mantlo**.

ANDY: *Well, through some lucky breaks, you picked up over the course of the next*



War Toy.

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the first Puerto Rican superhero."

"If you look down on most of my cityscapes, you see tall buildings, but they're all jammed into each other — there couldn't possibly be any streets there!"

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"I did the 1st INHUMANS book in a week."

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year THE FANTASTIC FOUR, THE AVENGERS, and THE INHUMANS series. What are your rememberances of doing three super-team series, as well as the bi-monthly SONS OF THE TIGER?

GEORGE: Oh, I loved it. THE AVENGERS was a dream come true. I wanted THE AVENGERS, and they found out they needed an artist for THE AVENGERS, so they got me in there. At the same time, **Roy Thomas** wanted me to do a FANTASTIC FOUR ANNUAL; since I had been **Rich Buckler**'s assistant, it seemed logical. I was working very, very fast. It looked it, but I was producing five pages a day, and I got a call saying that they were doing a new INHUMANS book and would I be interested in doing it, and with my love of **Kirby**'s work, of course! And they said, "Yes, but we needed it last month." So I whipped it out in a week.

ANDY: *Oh, no . . . the first issue . . .*

GEORGE: The first issue was whipped out in a week. And I was still doing FANTASTIC FOUR and, thanks to the inking of **Joe Sinnott**, it always looked the best of the lot. **Joe Sinnott** was such a fine artist, and the definitive look of that book at the time, that he made me look much better than I was. FANTASTIC FOUR took me longer, so it was a lot better **Perez** work than either THE AVENGERS or THE INHUMANS, both of which were done quicker or were done with inkers of less calibre than **Joe Sinnott**.

ANDY: *What about Vinnie Colletta's inking?*

GEORGE: Unfortunately, with the credit that he at least does it fast, Vinnie has a tendency of homogenizing work and *everyone* looks the same — no matter who draws it, it looks like **Vince Colletta**. At the time, I was just so happy doing THE AVENGERS that I didn't mind it. My art started improving on THE AVENGERS — I started learning how to draw, I became more conscious of what my style was at the time and I really wanted that to be more intact. **Vince Colletta** is a great equalizer; if you're a bad artist he'll bring you up to his level, but if you're a better artist he'll bring you down to his level, which makes him very valuable to an industry that needs the work produced. But if you have a certain feeling for your artwork, then you become dissatisfied by that. If you're starting out as I was, and Vinnie at the time was a better artist than I was, he brought me up to his level. At the time, I didn't mind it. Now, I definitely would. *Now* I would not want as overpowering an inker as **Vince Colletta**. I mean, I have a certain need to have my artwork look like the way I visualize it, and he wouldn't satisfy that need. He's valuable in his own right, but not valuable to me. And he wouldn't be the only one.

ANDY: *A trivia question here. On your early AVENGERS work, did you draw Iron Man with the nose because Marvel asked you — or was that a mistake?*

GEORGE: That was demanded. Iron Man wearing a nose was the way Iron Man was supposed to look. I mean, he wears a nose in his own comic. The reason he was wearing a nose is they designed these stupid damn toys of the little model figures of the Marvel characters, and they gave Iron Man a nose 'cause it saved them from having to build a different mold without a nose. Since all the other characters had noses, Iron Man had a nose on the toys, and suddenly they had a nose on the Iron Man character. It was ridiculous.

ANDY: *It looked really silly.*

GEORGE: I tried to get away with it; in

From the unpublished JLA/AVENGERS DC/MARVEL crossover, which was aborted. For the full story, see COMICS INTERVIEW #6.

"My hand was claw-like; I couldn't move

the first issue I drew him without a nose, and they asked me to put the nose in. "The nose has to be drawn in." *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *You dropped the FF and THE AVENGERS temporarily in 1976, to work with Dave Kraft again on LOGAN'S RUN...*

GEORGE: No, I didn't drop those books *in order* to do LOGAN'S RUN. I was going through, as I mentioned before, trouble with my marriage...I was just dropping books left and right. Eventually, I was only doing LOGAN'S RUN. And all the other books kind of slipped by.

ANDY: *You came down with an illness then, right?*

GEORGE: Right, a weird nerve pinch, which kind of deadened the nerves in my hands and in my back, and my hand was claw-like; I couldn't move it any more...when it relaxed, it would relax into a claw. I couldn't draw a straight line with a *ruler*, because I couldn't hold a pencil. When I showered I could barely feel the water hitting my body, it was that type of feeling. My body — the nerves had deadened. Everything knotted up, it was a freak accident. But Marvel paid for my medical bills, even though I wasn't on contract at the time, they were kind enough to do that. I believe **Archie Goodwin** was

it anymore. I couldn't hold a pencil."

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editor at the time. And after some electromassage therapy and all, I finally got back. That's when I really did LOGAN'S RUN with a vengeance, after that. After nearly thinking I'd lost my art career so young, I never took my art career for granted after that point.

ANDY: *On LOGAN'S RUN you couldn't base any of the characters on the real characters in the movie. How'd you like doing an adaptation that wasn't an adaptation?*

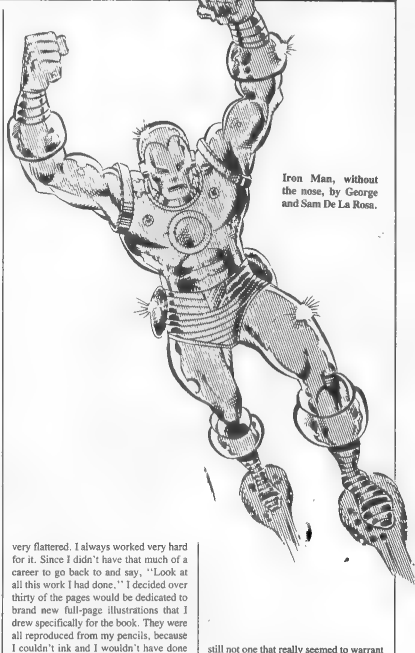
GEORGE: Well, considering the movie wasn't all that good, it didn't bother me after awhile. *(Laughter.)* But the one thing it allowed me to do, LOGAN'S RUN was a turning point in my career, because I actually had to use real scenery; I couldn't just fake Washington, what Washington looked like, the Lincoln Memorial and other things. It gave me a sense of doing scale, doing large backgrounds that look imposing against small figures. And with all the photo references I was using for LOGAN'S RUN, it taught me to draw real perspective. It was a real turning point for me, despite the fact that the movie was not very successful. I look at the comic as a real artistic turning point for me. I learned a *lot* on LOGAN'S RUN — storytelling, design, and actual drawing — LOGAN'S RUN was a real turning point. There are a lot of turning points in my career. "Gulliver of Mars" 'cause it was my first, "War Toy" because the storytelling I did on that showed that maybe I could do something like the MAN-WOLF, THE AVENGERS and all that, and I got all the group books thanks to "War Toy." And LOGAN'S RUN made me feel like now I can *really* start *designing*, too! It's really amazing, a lot of the turning points had nothing to do with the actual superhero team books. The turning points always seemed to be the books that, because of stuff I learned there, allowed me to do things with the superhero team books.

ANDY: *Right around the time that all this happened, LOGAN'S RUN and the breakup and the illness and everything, you did your portfolio book called PEREZ [mispronounced], uh, PEREZ: ACCENT ON THE FIRST "E."*

GEORGE: See, that's why I spell that!

ANDY: *What was your reaction, as a rising young comic artist, to a book dedicated to your career, one of the first of that kind of artist-oriented book?*

GEORGE: Oh, no, THE ART OF NEAL ADAMS, and other **Neal Adams** books had come out already; that's what the basis of doing mine was. Most people had a much longer career, so of course I was very flattered. I always worked very hard for it. Since I didn't have that much of a career to go back to and say, "Look at all this work I had done," I decided over thirty of the pages would be dedicated to brand new full-page illustrations that I drew specifically for the book. They were all reproduced from my pencils, because I couldn't ink and I wouldn't have done a good job had I done it that way, so these were all reproduced from very tight line pencil, no tone reproduction. The one thing I regret is that nowhere in the portfolio did it mention that it was reproduced from pencils. Some people thought it was just a bad reproduction of inking. So there was no mention of the fact that it was from pencils, which I thought would have been a selling point, "Wow, these are his pencils?" But I was really flattered by the book. I was not that big a deal. I was doing good work, I was a popular artist, but still not one that really seemed to warrant that kind of attention. According to most people, had it been marketed correctly, it might have sold very well, because I *was* becoming popular. I regret it didn't do well because I really put a lot of sweat into that.



Iron Man, without the nose, by George and Sam De La Rosa.

ANDY: *It showed. Some of your portfolio pieces are interesting . . . the hilarious spoof of your LOGAN'S RUN, WOGAN'S WUN . . .*

GEORGE: Yeah, I did that as a gift to the man who was publishing the book, and I was surprised that he wanted to print it.

"I did the best I could to produce a

HOPPIN' SPACE TOADS! WHAT'S THAT?
NEWEST THING FROM EARTH. IT'S CALLED PEREZ --ACCENT ON THE FIRST 'E'.
ANOTHER PORTFOLIO? JEEZ. THEY'RE ALL THE SAME!
WRONGO, GLOP! THIS ONE'S DIFFERENT, YESSIR!
THIS ONE'S SPECIAL!
ALL THE FULL-PAGE PIN-UPS WERE DONE ESPECIALLY FOR THIS BOOK!
ALL OF THEM?
YEAH, ALL 35 OF 'EM! AND THEY'VE ALL BEEN REPRODUCED FROM GEORGE PEREZ' PENCILS.
AND IT'S GOT A BIOGRAPHY BY RALPH MACCHIO AND A BEAUTIFUL FULL-COLOR WRAP-AROUND COVER THAT'LL KNOCK YOU OUT! IT'S PEREZ AT HIS BEST!
AND IT'S SO SLICK AND STURDY! IT MUST COST A FORTUNE!!!
WELL, NO EXPENSE WAS BEEN SPARED
BUT IT ONLY COSTS $5.00 plus $.75 Shipping.
$5.00!! GANGWAY!
GLOP WHERE YA GOIN'?
TO SPACE MAIL EXPRESS TO ORDER MY COPY OF PEREZ--ACCENT ON THE FIRST 'E'!
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He just thought it was great, 'cause it showed a different side of me.

ANDY: *Yeah, that one featured Elmer Fudd as Wogan and Foghorn Leghorn as Box. Another piece in there is "Yvie's Dream," and it features a young lady caressing a centaur. How did this piece get chosen?*

GEORGE: Yvie was my wife at the time, and that was an idea she had and I visually constructed it, and the piece went to her. It was her, it was an illustration for her, and we used it in the book as a fantasy piece.

ANDY: *After LOGAN'S RUN you worked on two other licensed stories, the dreaded BEATLES book —*

GEORGE: I don't dread the BEATLES book, not that first one. SGT. PEPPER, on the other hand. . .SGT. PEPPER was a nightmare. With the BEATLES book, I did the best I could with the abilities I had to produce an actual illustrated biography, comics style, of **The Beatles**. Now, of course, that's never the same as being there — we're not a film documentary, we couldn't use the music — but I thought we did a really decent job as Americans, trying to capture the Liverpudlians as best we could, particularly **Dave Kraft** — **Dave Kraft** knew more about it than I did. I give him full credit on his research — trying to separate fact from fancy in all the bios that have been done of **The Beatles**. And I think we did a very credible job. I think Dave did a hell of a job researching it, with **Dwight Zimmerman's** help — I never *knew* a lot of the stuff Dave was writing in there, being the big rock fan which he was, and probably still is today. It really worked out nicely. With **Klaus Janson** giving it that realistic touch that my style did not have at the time, it definitely gave THE BEATLES a nice look. It was one of the early Baxter things that they'd done, that the companies had done so it looked very bright; maybe a little too bright, in hindsight. But I was very proud of that.

SGT. PEPPER, on the other hand, that Dave and I worked on, we had no cooperation from the people producing it. A lousy movie to begin with, I had almost no reference that I could use, the script kept changing over and over again, and the script was lousy to begin with. By the time I finished that I was such an emotional wreck — at this time the divorce was going through — that it was horrible. My greatest feeling of satisfaction is that it has never been released in the United States, I never saw the book printed. I've never seen a copy of the printed book, and I hope I *never* see the book. End of *that* book! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *That was only printed in Japan, right?*

GEORGE: Our revenge for what they've done to our motor industry.

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"I think we did a very credible job —

George designed this Tom Palmer painting as the cover to DARK THE BEATLES STORY. Opposite, Grey Morrow painted this version of George's cover, but it was never used.

trying to separate fact from fancy."

"Starlin gave me the one story I thought

George watches George. Harrison casts a watchful eye, in this panel designed for but never used in the BEATLES book.

ANDY: *And that was with DAK again, also?*

GEORGE: And **Jim Mooney** as inker.

ANDY: *Well, you also completed a werewolf story for Marvel that hasn't been printed. What was that about?*

GEORGE: It was during the time when they had all the black-and-white magazines, and it was actually my very second full story. It was done right after "Gulliver of Mars." I was working for Rich and he did a few of the redrawings and helped out on the first couple of pages and then left me totally to myself. And it was a full, complete story; in hindsight it looks very dreadful, especially the perspective, as usual. It was shelved, it fell into a big pot of other inventory, and has never been seen again.

ANDY: *After you recovered from the divorce and the illness and all, you came back and started strong again on pencilling, beginning the Michael saga in AVENGERS that Jim Shooter wrote. And that was your first real chance to draw forty-three thousand characters for the book, because all the Avengers were in there—*

GEORGE: Unfortunately, I bowed out quickly. Again, I was having a really hard time getting back in the swing. In order to get better, I was starting to slow down in order to concentrate on the work. Which was probably fine for my artistic growth, but did not do a lot for my deadlines. So I came up with the idea of doing a big star-spanning story with Jim. I just wanted to draw a lot of characters, and Jim came up with a story to make it work. And unfortunately after talking Jim into it, and Jim coming up with this storyline that he and I worked on — we were co-plotting — then I kind of left him in the lurch by dropping the book totally and he's stuck having to complete this story on his own without the person who conned him into it to begin with! *(Laughter.)* So poor Jim had to do the Michael saga on his own; I don't know if I would have finished it the same way, if we had worked together or whatever. It's not really important. But, like, it is interesting that it's, almost like a...

ANDY: *Prequel...*

GEORGE: Prequel, that's the word, to what SECRET WARS ended up being.

ANDY: *So George Perez—*

GEORGE: I'm not taking the blame for SECRET WARS, sorry! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Well, you've, we've been talking about the groups a lot, and everybody who knows George Perez knows George Perez likes to do group books. You're so good at drawing large amounts of people and making them all interesting. Why do you like the groups so much?*

GEORGE: I like interaction. I'm a social animal, man's a social animal. I also like to draw for drawing's sake, so this way I don't get bored drawing one character. And I like watching other people, seeing them in the movies, silent films, sound films, television, interacting with each other. I pay attention to that, and I try to imbue the characters with a little bit of life. In some cases, it's a lot tougher because the characters are so set in their body patterns — there are certain ways this character will stand, there are certain ways that character will walk. It's like breathing life into a statue. Or dubbing a foreign film. It gives me a challenge. The partiotic stance of Captain America, Hawkeye, the slight swagger in his walk, or the mysteriousness of the Vision, the body and almost exotic allure of the Scarlet Witch, and the much more girl-next-door youthful fun-loving attitude of Jan Van Dyne, the Wasp. Those are the types of things you latch on to, and I had a great time just having people criss-crossing together. To this day, that's something I still enjoy doing.

ANDY: *Every now and then I hear you say that you'd like to do a story with one or two characters, yet even in BATMAN #400, you got the section of the story that has all eighty villains...*

GEORGE: But you've got to give credit to **Jim Starlin**, with HEROES AGAINST HUNGER, he gave me Superman in the middle of a desert for one page, and four characters in the middle of a desert for the other page. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *So you got your wish?*

GEORGE: I got my wish. **Jim Starlin** gave me the one chance to do a story that I thought no one would *ever* assign me to do.

ANDY: *Well, right about the time that you quit doing THE AVENGERS — you had to quit because you were starting at DC — you said that you would only do the TEEN TITANS if you could do one issue of the JUSTICE LEAGUE. Right?*

GEORGE: Right. **Dick Dillin** was still drawing it at the time.

ANDY: *And then unfortunately he died.*

GEORGE: When Dick died, I got a call from **Paul Levitz** asking if I would be interested in doing the JLA. And of course I wanted to — I just didn't want to do it that quickly, not for that reason, but I understood it. So I was doing all three

no one would ever assign me to do."

"A Hard Day's Night"
A HIGH POWER, DELIGHTFULLY ORIGINAL COMEDY ABOUT A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE BEATLES, THE BLACK-AND-WHITE FEATURE PREMIERES JULY 6, 1964, TO ECSTATIC REVIEWS!
HEY, RINGO-- WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
PAGE FIVE.
Queen
DIRECTED BY RICHARD LESTER AND WRITTEN BY A FELLOW LIVERPUDLIAN, ALUN OWEN, THE MOVIE SHATTERS ALL EXPECTATIONS AND SETS BOX OFFICE RECORDS!
AND IT WAS DURING THE FILMING OF THE PICTURE THAT GEORGE MET HIS WIFE-TO-BE...
ACTRESS PATTI BOYD...
THE BEATLES
"A HARD DAY'S NIGHT" IS THE ESSENCE OF BEATLEMANIA-- AND THE ORIGINAL MUSIC IS AS FRESH AND INNOCENT AS THE FILM ITSELF! IT IS, AT THIS TIME THAT THE WORLD ACCLAIMS THEM THE BEST SONGWRITERS SINCE SCHUBERT!

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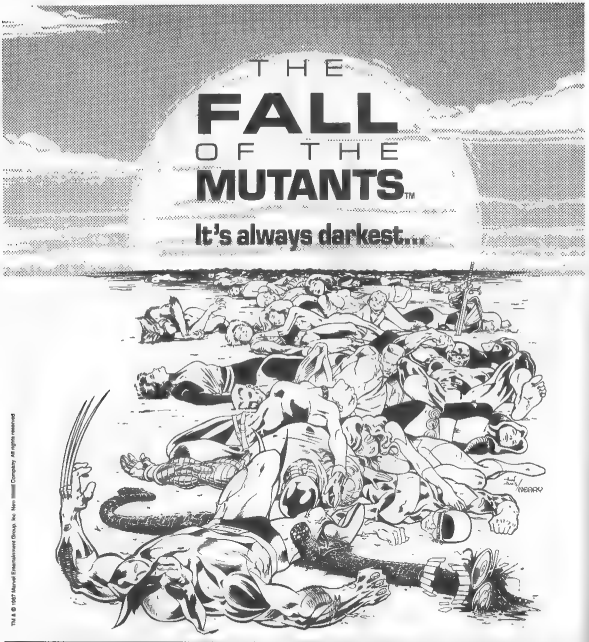

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THE UNCANNY X-MEN
#225 #226 #227

X-FACTOR
#24 #25 #26

THE NEW MUTANTS
#59 #60 #61

STARTING IN SEPTEMBER, FROM MARVEL

"We wouldn't have done TITANS if not for X-MEN."

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books and suddenly both companies upped their page count, so it was like the equivalent of suddenly having another seventeen pages on my schedule.

ANDY: *It was like four books a month!*

GEORGE: Like another book being tossed in. One book had to be dropped, so I ended up dropping the only book that I had enough experience on — I'd just gotten on the JLA and I was co-creator of the TEEN TITANS, so I had to drop the only Marvel title I had. I sent a note to **Jim Shooter** apologizing for doing that, and making a statement so no one would think I was leaving because I was angry at anyone, but only because I ran out of time. I couldn't handle it any more. THE AVENGERS had to be given up.

ANDY: *About your JLA work, once you got on as regular penciller, you took an issue out for a fill-in, and ended up doing a fill-in on your own fill-in by Chuck Patton, right?*

GEORGE: No, that was **Keith Pollard.** Yeah, he was doing fill-ins and then Keith fell behind and I ended up having to finish off the story that Keith started. Since he was filling in for me, it was really strange. I ended up filling in on my own fill-in.

ANDY: *You haven't done that many fill-ins?*

GEORGE: In my early career, I had plenty of fill-ins; I still do now. I've had fill-ins on the TEEN TITANS — including my fifth issue, which **Curt Swan** filled in. But very seldom do I end up filling in on myself; that was a really rare time, having to finish off a story that I was supposed to be getting a break from.

ANDY: *When you first started on the TITANS, you said you didn't think it would last five issues, and said that you were afraid that people would compare them with the X-MEN — but you didn't read the X-MEN, right?*

GEORGE: At the time, I did. I drew an issue of the X-MEN — the X-MEN ANNUAL — so I knew about the X-MEN But I was worried about the visual ideas. Particularly, Starfire worried me, because I had to color her almost like a lion with the green eyes, the golden skin and dark brown mane. And considering the fact that they were teenage characters, it might seem too much like the X-MEN. The one thing that we hated was having to keep the name "TEEN" in TEEN TITANS. But they really were teenagers, not just teens in name, actual teens dealing with the fact that they *are* teens, and that gave us the slant. We were doing an X-MEN type of team, that was true — we wouldn't have been doing it if it weren't for the X-MEN. But the Titans' sense of family, their sense of being young, gave them the individuality that was definitely just theirs. Issue #8, "A Day in The Lives," was what nailed it for us. We did that totally personal type story on them, and got people interested in them just as characters. They weren't just another group of superheroes in costumes teamed up; they were characters people cared about. And from that point on, THE TEEN TITANS developed an identity of their own. There are always going to be the die-hards who'll say, "Yeah, ripoff, plagairism," but the TITANS have proven that they have their own legs to stand on.

An INHUMANS page from 1972, pencilled and inked by George. Guest-starring the original X-MEN.

ANDY: *In your first TITANS work, you were inked by a somewhat newer inker, Romeo Tanghal, and at first you didn't like his work much.*

GEORGE: Well, being from the Philippine school, he had a tendency of making everything look very, very pretty. And had a tendency of having a very thick-line approach to almost anything — very flat and watery. He improved as he went along. Again, I look at my work in those days, drawing these big thunder-thighed women, people all having the same faces and, hey . . . it took a bit for both of us to grow. Unfortunately, as the years went by, I was

"I've used: Marilyn Monroe, my first

"Cyborg was originally a young Jim Brown, the football player turned actor."

growing in one direction and Romeo was growing in another direction. He was going much more for an open, florid look and I was going for a much more complex, precise, textured look. So we started separating; I think, at that point, we were becoming incompatible. We had a nice assimilation of our styles, we were working together nicely, and then after awhile we started drifting apart and we were no longer working together.

ANDY: *When you started developing the individual characters, the individual faces of the TEEN TITANS, who did you base the characters on? You've often said that Changeling was a young Mickey Rooney. But who were the others in real life?*

GEORGE: In real life, let's see now...Koriand'r, she's so many characters I've used: **Marilyn Monroe**, my first wife, oh gosh, there was a stripper somewhere, I used... *(Laughter.)* She was so many. Originally, Raven was **Persis Khambatta**, the actress who played in the first STAR TREK film, and later became a young lady named **Fran MacGregor**, who was a dancer, and I used some of her features, particularly her figure, for Raven. Cyborg was originally a young **Jim Brown**, the football player turned actor. Dick Grayson was primarily **Burt Ward** — he had a very physical face, but it worked, so I used **Burt Ward** as the original one. And Wonder Girl originally was **Marie Osmond**. *(Laughter.)* And then I kind of gave her a much more *stately* face as opposed to a wholesome all-American face as the years went on. But originally she was **Marie Osmond**. And that was upon Marv's suggestion. And Kid Flash was **Ron Howard**, not as much facially as opposed to character-wise. The face I just basically leaned out; he developed the body of a dancer, which I also gave to Jericho later, when I gave him the body of, like, **Mikhail Baryshnikov** type. And Jericho's face was based on a cross between **Terry Austin** and **David Morse**, who plays Dr. Morrison on ST. ELSEWHERE.

ANDY: *What about Tara?*

GEORGE: Tara was just a cute little girl, although I based a little bit of that on my wife Carol's sister, Barbara. A little upturned nose... Barbara does not have the *teeth* that Tara had. I wanted Tara to be a girl who looked normal. Which also means her death caught everyone even more offguard.

ANDY: *Are there any particular actors you would want to play the TITANS in movies?*

GEORGE: I've never worried about that. There are those people that have certain features that work, certain features that don't. Some who look the part but couldn't act worth a damn, or have the really good voices but don't have the bodies for them. Everyone says **Michael J. Fox** would make a good Changeling and, years ago, he would have. Now he's too old. And there are others... **Burt Ward**, he was Robin at one time; he's way too old now. He's forty — it just doesn't work. And the girls are even tougher to cast. To get a face like Raven, I also thought of a young **Barbara Luna**, she played in the "Mirror, Mirror" episode of STAR TREK, Kirk's love interest. And she's a night club singer now. And there are others. How do you cast Kory?

ANDY: *Loni Anderson?*

GEORGE: Well, Loni's age goes against her, and other people who have the right face, like **Audrey Landers** has a good Kory face, but she doesn't have Kory's figure...she has the right personality, just the wrong figure. So *short! (Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Okay. How do you feel about the Titans and their various supporting characters; what are your comments about each of the different characters there?*

GEORGE: Wonder Girl? My favorite. My favorite character, as far as person I would love to meet the most

Robin/Nightwing, I like him a lot because of his history, he's been around so long, and there's a certain sleek sexuality about the character. He's got a certain sense of everyman, a young swashbuckler type...he's probably the

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wife, there was a stripper somewhere. . .”

SURE, KID...
HIT ONE TO RIGHT FIELD FOR ME, HUH?
M-MISTER... YOUR HAND...!
NUTS! HE'S GONNA SCREAM. MUST THINK I'M SOME KINDA MONSTER!
BUT...
WOW, IT'S REAL NEAT. I WISH THEY GAVE ME ONE LIKE THAT.

only character to have developed a rabid following. That I find incredible, particularly because he came out as a sidekick — that he's got the strongest following of any character really makes me feel good about Nightwing. He's the only Titan who made the CBG poll, and it was great, you know. The fact that he's still fresh after all these years.

Kid Flash / Flash, he's always been the one who's been the most trouble, because he was a hard character to handle. If he's so super fast, technically if handled correctly, he'd make the rest of the characters superfluous. No way he could ever be caught by anything, no one should ever get the upper hand on him. So he never was my favorite character, only because he was just difficult to handle in a group situation. I think the Frances Kane character introduced with him was a nice addition, but they didn't play her up enough to kind of give him a much stronger anchor. I did like the fact that he had two living parents

Changeling, good comic relief, fun to draw — except when you're drawing all those animals 'cause you'll constantly get into other references — I like his rubbery face, his very expressive face.

Cyborg, my personal favorite to draw, mostly because I like a big, strong, scrappy guy. I'm 6'2" and I come from the ghetto, too, so I have a strong identification.

Raven? Interesting to draw. Without Trigon it's going to be interesting to see how to handle her. Now that she's open to emotion, it opens up the character. We can do a lot more of her opening up to a society that she had closed off for so many years. I think she's going to have a lot of potential.

Tara, she was made to be killed, she served her purpose. That was it.

Jericho—

ANDY: *You didn't get any attachment to Tara?*

GEORGE: No, because I knew we were going to kill her. So I deliberately used all the things to make her as likeable and cute as possible, so people would never believe we were going to kill a sixteen-year-old. And she was a sixteen-year-old

I MEAN, ALL THEY GAVE ME WAS THIS REG'LAR ONE.
HUH? I DON'T GET IT.
MY HAND. IT'S A PROS... PROSMETIC ...WELL, YOU KNOW..
A PROSTHETIC... AN ARTIFICIAL ARM.
JOHNNY? WHAT'S TAKING YOU SO LONG? AND HAVEN'T I TOLD YOU NOT TO BOTHER-- OHHHH.
IT'S OKAY, MISS SIMMS. HE'S JUST LIKE US. HE'S GOT A PROS... A NEW HAND, TOO.
ONLY HIS IS REAL SHINY AN' REAL NEAT.
SOMEONE PINCH ME. AN' WAKE ME UP!

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SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #23 **Battling for his life and his sanity, young Aramis Merrow faces spirits only he can see. Are they truly spirits from his past come to destroy him? Or do they exist only in his over-stressed mind? Beyond the aid of the other Southern Knights, Aramis must fight alone against foes beyond mortal comprehension!**

by **Henry Vogel**

COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION
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"I based Aqualad's face on a girl I dated."

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sociopath. She was one of our cleverest gimmicks; we deliberately created her in order to lead everyone astray. So we couldn't build any fondness for her, 'cause we knew full well what her whole motive for existence was. Her existence was basically to keep the stories interesting; we were tossing a curve that no one would have expected.

ANDY: *You didn't even love to hate her, huh?*

GEORGE: No I loved handling her, because she *was* such a good idea. But she *was* an idea. Not as much a person. She was there to show exactly how much their humanity can be one thing they have to be careful about, the Teen Titans have to be careful about...they can be too trusting, or their own weaknesses can be used against them.

Jericho, I personally...I created Jericho, I came up with the power, the idea of the mute and everything else. So I have a much more personal feeling about him. One regret I have for Jericho is that I left before I could ever really do anything with him. But I would like to do more with him; I think he has a lot more of the love element in him that he can show with the other Titans, because he's there as a listener and he's compassionate, he's really, really a nice guy. And Marv brought in that darker edge to show that he was a good fighter and he has a history, too; he remains nice through just about everything that happens to him, and that gives him a very strong...that's something Marv did very well.

Speedy and Aqualad? Nicest guest stars. I like Speedy/Aqualad because of the limitation of his powers. He's nice — nice visual — but now that Robin's wearing his Nightwing costume, he's the only one that's showing his bare legs. Again, a nice little sexiness about him. I always like that kinky hair, and I deliberately gave him a more Italian looking face—

ANDY: *Sort of like Patrick Duffy?*

GEORGE: Actually, I based it on a girl's face. I dated a girl, she had very strong features, and I matched them, made them a little more masculine and made Aqualad out of her.

The Titans forgotten? Most of them well left that way! *(Laughter.)* With the possible exception of Lilith, 'cause I enjoy doing her but, now that she's gone, it's just as well, because of Raven's role in there. All the others, frankly, I don't care.

The Terminator, my favorite of the TITANS' villains, because I really liked the idea of the strong, massive-yet-debonair older man. The fact that he's definitely a man in his fifties, but he's strong as an ox, very handsome, very polished — you can understand, again, a sexual appeal. I'm very big on sexual appeal of characters — particularly males. Since all the men are big and muscular, to show a bit of sexuality in them, that's a tough thing to do. The fact that the Titans have developed...I've gotten mail from women who think that Terminator is sexy as all hell. And that's great. That's the feeling I wanted.

Brother Blood? Marv's favorite character, not one of mine, only because I've never quite understood him. He was always more Marv's character than mine. He was a little too enigmatic for my taste. And sometimes a little too unrealistic, in the fact that I can't believe how he can have such a strong influence for such a strong turn-off presence. Visually, he has nothing that would be appealing to me, anyway. If I were a wayward youth, he would scare the hell out of me. So, like, he's more Marv's character than mine. I think Marv's got a stronger grip on him. I never quite understood him.

Blackfire? My tribute to women in leather. *(Laughter.)* I like the look of that woman, you know?

ANDY: *Even though in their first appearance she wasn't in leather?*

GEORGE: They forgot all the black in

"Tara — she was made to be killed, she served her purpose."

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For more than two decades the boundless imagination of Robert Crumb has left readers scrambling for superlatives. What it all boils down to is that you have to experience the funniest and most original cartoonist of our time for yourself. Now, for the first time, **The Complete Crumb Comics** collects all the major strips, cartoons, illustrations, and sketchbooks, including hundreds of pages never before published in the U.S.! *The Complete Crumb Comics* will include:

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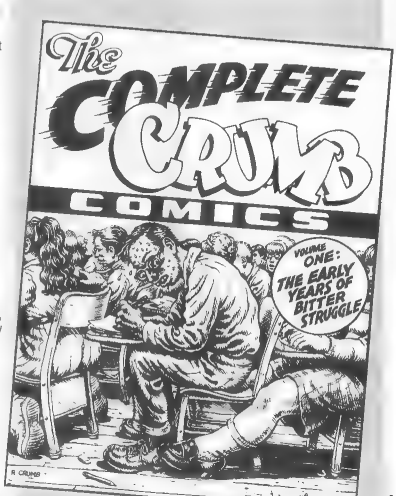

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"Trigon? — this is a berserk Bambi!"

Blackfire; they forgot to ink all the black areas. But I like her. The one thing I regret from other artists' points of view is that I gave her such a harsh face; I wanted it attractive yet strong, and many people, if you don't get those angles of that face just right, she comes out ugly — and Blackfire is not an ugly woman, she's just very harsh looking.

Trigon? Big, strong, incredibly awesome, what people thought looked like a silly thing of doing the little antlers on his head, was — yeah — this is a berserk Bambi. *(Laughter.)* But he was such a strong, powerful presence that I'm glad he's no longer being used, 'cause he served his purpose. He was our nightmare character.

Cheshire? I'm a bit disappointed in Cheshire, in the way she turned out, because it always bothered me that Cheshire had the baby, of any Titan. It keeps the Titans' world so small — you introduce a character out of the blue and, automatically, she's had something to do with the Teen Titans. And that always bothered me. I don't begrudge Marv doing that; I myself personally don't go for it. Not every superhero or super-villain has to have interrelationships with each other.

Vigilante? Nice character, I think Marv kind of copped out with him. I think he should have been a lot more of a strong, DEATHWISH type, as opposed to a character who can keep going back and forth. I think his potential was a lot stronger than his actual fruition.

The Brotherhood of Evil? Some were interesting. I liked Phobia. I liked Plasmus, the idea of Plasmus touching and melting in his hand. . . Warp, he's okay, I'm not too crazy about him — his power's interesting; I designed a bad costume. I don't like his costume, it's my fault. Houngan never turned me on, one way or the other. The idea of an electronic voodoo I've just never thought was all that great. And, of course, Monsieur Mallah, the Brain — very nostalgic. I like him because of the fact they were the DOOM PATROL villains.

ANDY: *And The Fearsome Five?*

GEORGE: The Fearsome Five — a dumb group, initially. Dr. Light, because he's such a loser, they got rid of him. Jinx, I had nothing to do with, so I can't make any judgement on her. Mammoth, standard. . . standard big super-villain, brute force guy. Shimmer, nice but hard to handle realistically. Psimon, my least favorite of the group, because he was so powerful and, my fault, I designed a silly-looking appearance for him. I wanted to

"Blackfire? My tribute to women in leather."

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Comics Interview

So far, there are only four titles from David Anthony Kraft's publishing company, but I like all of them.

• *MICRA* is an acronym for *Mind Controlled Remote Automation*. It is also one heck of a good comic book by Lamar Waldron and Ted Boonthanakit. This is a 12-issue limited series about a crippled woman who can project her consciousness into an automaton (see the title)

That is a much-too-simplified summation of a rich, complex SF novel in comic-book form. Ted's art has been compared to many different American artists (none of whose work Ted has seen, he was born in Thailand and grew up in Africa) and is remarkably clear and exciting

Grade A

MICRA™

MIND CONTROLLED REMOTE AUTOMATON

• *Aristocratic Extraterrestrial Time-Traveling Thieves* (*X-Thieves* for short) has had two first issues, which is annoying to indexers and compilers of price guides, but the bright, sprightly scripts by Henry Vogel and the appropriately humorous art of Mark Propst make up for that. One of the main features of this comic book is that, like the *Mad* comic books, the panels are filled with gags, such as the crisis hotline which warns "New universe forming — disaster imminent!"

The Southern Knights make a guest appearance in the second first issue, in which the X-Thieves steal the formula for original Coca-Cola. This is one of the best of the funny comic books (and one of the handful that really is funny)

Grade A

X-THIEVES™

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS™

• I haven't seen the last couple of issues of *Southern Knights* yet but, unless the series has gone radically downhill since #16, this is still one of the best and most original of all the superhero groups. Grade: A.

• While *Comics Interview* is not a comic book, I think I can squeeze in a recommendation. This excellent publication gives a well-rounded view of the industry, with interviews with writers, pencillers, inkers, letterers, colorists, and others

Naturally, your interest in an issue will depend on who is being interviewed, but there have been 40 issues of *Comics Interview* and no totally dull ones — not even the *G.I. Joe* issue. Grade: A

Four titles.
Four As. Four for four. Way to go, Dave.

— Don Thompson
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"I don't understand Brother Blood."

make him look frail, but that did look kind of dumb. It looked like he was wearing a commode on his head. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Now in TITANS, you co-plotted with Marv issues #6 through #8, and #38 on . . .*

GEORGE: Well, actually, we were co-plotting even before then. #38 was when it became the strongest, when he and I were coming in as equal partners. He and I talked out plots way before that, but then he would type out the plot and use what we talked about together — so Marv had written the plot. The difference was, starting with issue #38, we never had a written plot from that point on. We just talked about it, I drew it, he wrote it. So he was counting as much on my writing notes *to* him as I used to on getting notes *from* him. That's when it became an official co-plotting, because there was no written plot by **Marv Wolfman** himself.

ANDY: *Scripts don't exist?*

GEORGE: No, scripts do exist. He had to do the dialogue for the letterer. I drew the story from our conversations, though.

ANDY: *How do you do plots with Marv? Which scenes are yours? There's the Cyborg scene in issue #8, where we first meet Sarah Sims and them . . .*

GEORGE: Right.

ANDY: *What are some of the other scenes that you have specifically put in?*

GEORGE: Well, Kory taking her dress off in the middle of the park, in that same issue, is something I thought expressed her. *(Laughter.)* A lot of the stuff with Cyborg; the whole *scene* with Cyborg and his parents in the #40s issues — I wrote out notes like crazy for Marv, so he paraphrased the entire scene from what I had written in there.

ANDY: *Cyborg's grandparents?*

GEORGE: His grandparents, excuse me and thank you. His grandparents were really a lot of what I wanted to put in there. I created the physical idea, I based them on **Sarah Cully**, the late actress who played Mother Jefferson on THE JEFFERSONS TV series, and on **Scatman Crothers**, and used them as my basis, thus affecting how I would handle the characters' dialog. And I came up with that scene. A lot of the wedding I came up with. I knew more about a large wedding, because I *had* one; Marv never had a large wedding. So I knew about all the political and emotional things that happen there, plus using the titles we worked out on those. And a few things I tossed in. It was my idea to use Harlequin in that story, 'cause he hated Harlequin, and I knew he didn't want to put her in there. So I put her in there, anyway.

ANDY: *That made some of us fans very happy.*

GEORGE: And, of course, putting in a lot of the TITAN TALKERS. Marv okayed that — I didn't do it behind his back — but as to *where*, I was in charge. I knew more of them; I knew most of the girls and guys who are involved in Titan Club. I'm much more personal about my relationship with the fans than Marv is. Marv enjoys his fans, but enjoys his privacy. I'm much more gregarious, much more outgoing, so a lot of the fans contact me on a personal basis through letters or phone calls. So I did a lot of the wedding issue.

"Who is Donna Troy?" is one book we worked so closely together, I couldn't tell you what scenes were mine and what scenes were Marv's. It was symbionic. That one is a real **Perez/Wolfman** collaboration. Or **Wolfman/Perez** collaboration, depending on your point of view. *(Laughter.)* And that one I couldn't honestly tell you . . . the only scenes I know were fully mine were the framing sequence — having Dick Grayson in the midst of that black office, having him turn on his tape recorder, call Kory and say how good he felt, because Marv and I decided to put a happy ending on it. We weren't quite sure how to end it, and we decided to give it a happy ending. Dick calling Kory was my idea and I came up with the dialog, a couple of lines that Dick

The terrible twosome — George and DAK.

"I turned down the President of the United

PROLOGUE
ALONE IN NEW YORK, WITHOUT MONEY, SHE IS ARRESTED...
YOU WANT MONEY, YOU CAME TO THE RIGHT PLACE. THEY CALL ME LARRY HONEY—AND IF YOU WANT, I CAN SHOW YOU HOW TO MAKE BIG BUCKS.
YOU'LL CARE!
YEAH, HONEY. JUST COME WITH YOUR VERY OWN PIMP!
HER NAME IS ELIZABETH JOHNSON AND HE IS FROM CLEARWATER, FLA...
FORGET QUARTERS, MAN. I CAN GET YOU ENOUGH TO BUY THAT BIG, BIG DREAM MACHINE.
OHOH, NOT-SHOT, YOU JUST DONE STRUCK IT RICH!
YOU INTERESTED, MAN?
YOU KNOW IT...
HIS NAME IS STEVEN BROWN AND HE IS FROM SAN DIEGO, CA...
DON'T NEED YOUR DIRTY MONEY, MAN!
BOMBS MAKE IT ON MY OWN!
BUT YOURSELF, AMIGO, THERE ARE PLENTY OF OPENINGS!
AND SO IT WORE...
REAL BIG MONEY, BRO'! JUST FOR LOOKIN' BOMB WELL-TRICKED SMARTYPANTS.
YOU SURE YOU'LL SHUT?...

From "Runaways," by Perez and Tanghal, from 1982.

says, "Kory, it's me." "Great. I feel just great. What are you doing tonight?" That was my scene. There are others that I can't think of. Probably just as well; it shows that in our symbionic relationship, we start losing track of who did what, 'cause it's such a contribution from the both of us. The only ones where I didn't contribute much are the ones having to do with Brother Blood. I don't understand the character! Of course, since I designed Jericho, a lot of the stuff I did with Jericho's body language and reactions to people was more mine; I had a grasp of sign language at the time, since I had books on it.

ANDY: *You did two "Runaway" books which were very well received, not only by fandom at large, but by Nancy Reagan. What did you think when you first heard about Nancy Reagan wanting to use yours and Marv's characters, in the drug campaign . . .?*

GEORGE: It wasn't that they wanted to use the TITANS; they wanted to use DC Heroes — until they saw the "Runaways" book — the commission that was handling it. They found out that we had a book dealing with teenage characters, so what better book to do about teenage problems than a book with role models? And when they saw the "Runaways," they decided, "Hey, we'd like to do it with these characters." Marv and I were informed, and I said I would definitely draw it. It was more of a problem than the "Runaways," because the "Runaways" was strictly DC editorial; we could do a stronger story. Unfortunately, with the drug books we were dealing with so many committees, it became a much more watered-down book than it was intended to be. Marv's research on real drugs was muted by a lot of editing down. They didn't want to cause blame here, they didn't want parents to feel intimidated there; a lot of groups were kind of cross-pressuring, until the book became a watered-down version of what it was originally intended to be. Had we produced the same story strictly as a DC book, I am sure it would have been a lot more potent — and probably a lot closer to reality than the book ended up being.

ANDY: *So you didn't actually have contact with Nancy, then?*

GEORGE: Oh, no. In fact, we were invited to the White House for some kind of conference but I didn't go, anyway. So I can say I turned down the President of

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States for a meeting. I was invited. . ."

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"Robin was licensed to Nabisco, so they quickly renamed him The Protector." Standing front and center in the **Anti-Drug Book #1.**

the United States for a meeting. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Now that's something John Byrne can't say.*

GEORGE: Yep. I was invited to the White House and I turned it down. My schedule would not permit me to go to the White House. Marv did go, and he didn't get to meet the President, either. I believe there was some kind of terrorist activity that prevented the **Reagans** from actually being there.

ANDY: *What did you think of the changes they made in the stories, Kory's costume . . .*

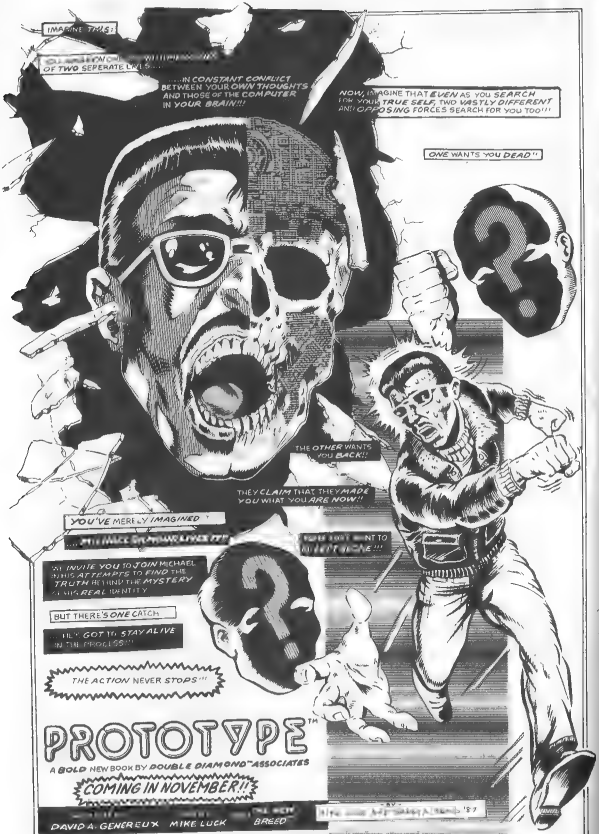
GEORGE: Kory's costume was *my* idea to change. I knew that we were dealing with young kids, and I knew that we were going to be going through some kind of committee — why give them ammunition to complain about something that wasn't important to the book? I changed Kory's costume at the bustline a bit, so we wouldn't have to deal with something that we knew would have been a problem immediately. Why ask for trouble. We censored ourselves there.

ANDY: *Did you change any other things?*

GEORGE: Wonder Girl, her neckline was kept modest, we didn't show her cleavage as much. Basically, that was it. Everyone else was left intact. Raven's costume didn't require anything.

ANDY: *That pretty much covers everything.*

GEORGE: Exactly. She's a modest character in the way she dresses. But the only other change was that Robin was drawn and inked as leader of the TEEN TITANS because of an incredibly ridiculous bit of trouble with licensing. Keebler, the cookie company, was sponsoring the first drug book, and through the licensing of superhero cookies, Robin was licensed to Nabisco. So we couldn't use Robin on a Keebler-licensed product, even though it was a totally different type of marketing. **Dave Manak** — who was editing that book — whited out the entire costuming on Robin and drew this costume they quickly designed, and renamed him The Protector. So you have The Protector doing all the Robin-type things, like flying the T-jet, and giving all the orders


IMAGINE THIS!
...IN CONSTANT CONFLICT BETWEEN YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND THOSE OF THE COMPUTER IN YOUR BRAIN!!!
NOW, IMAGINE THAT EVEN AS YOU SEARCH FOR YOUR TRUE SELF, TWO VASTLY DIFFERENT AND OPPOSING FORCES SEARCH FOR YOU TOO!!!
ONE WANTS YOU DEAD!!
THE OTHER WANTS YOU BACK!!!
THEY CLAIM THAT THEY MADE YOU WHAT YOU ARE NOW!!
YOU'VE MERELY IMAGINED
I'LL INVITE YOU TO JOIN MICHAEL IN HIS ATTEMPTS TO FIND THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYSTERY OF HIS REAL IDENTITY
BUT THERE'S ONE CATCH.
HE'S GOT TO STAY ALIVE IN THE MEANTIME!!!
THE ACTION NEVER STOPS!!!
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"I was really unhappy with the art."

— and who is this guy? Every single pose he's in, that was Robin in the original pose. Anyone who has the original artwork can see all the whiteout on that Protector figure and, if you hold it up to the light, you can see Robin's costume underneath.

ANDY: *So why did they decide to keep him for the other two books which you did?*

GEORGE: Now you had a character where they'd say, "This character was designed *specifically* for these drug books," to cover their tracks, so he was utilized over and over again, because now he was the binding tie that made these stories different from the TITAN stories.

ANDY: *You didn't design his costume . . . ?*

GEORGE: No, no. **Dave Manak** designed it.

ANDY: *An ugly costume.*

GEORGE: *(Laughter.)* The colors were ugly, the mask was dumb . . . but that was the breaks.

ANDY: *Getting back to the early TITANS, what do you think about the common storyline that was prevalent in a lot of the early stories — the parent versus child syndrome?*

GEORGE: I had a lot of complaints about that. Marv and I talked about it, and we worked it out. At the end of issue #7, with the resolution of Victor's thing, it started to bother me. It did come from timing — Francis, Kane, The Disruptor, all these people. Eventually, we toned that down. I noticed it, too, and Marv had certain ideas of why he was doing it, but eventually he realized we were going through overkill.

ANDY: *Getting too "teeny"?*

GEORGE: Yeah, you sometimes get too wrapped up with the teen problems in relation to their folks, until you realize that there's more to being a teenager than just having problems with your family.

ANDY: *So what are your favorite TITANS stories, and what are your least favorite?*

GEORGE: My favorite TITANS story is "Who is Donna Troy?" Second favorite is "We Are Gathered Here Today." You notice a certain similarity of those two books. Third, "Shadows in The Dark," the first TITANS Baxter edition, because I'm really happy with my ink job on that. And then there are other favorites, like "A Day in The Lives." And "Runaways." Again, the personal stories mean much more to me than the superheroes.

My least favorite stories? "Lights Out Everyone," issue #37, which is a Doctor Light and the Fearsome Five crossover with THE OUTSIDERS — because it existed strictly as a crossover with THE OUTSIDERS, no other reason for the book to be there. Those have all the standard comic-book cliches. Hero group meets hero group, hero group fights hero group. Then they find out, "Hey, we shouldn't be fighting this hero group." Understanding! "Let's fight villain group!" I didn't like it at all, and Marv didn't particularly care for it, either.

ANDY: *That was a totally useless interaction between Geo Force and Terra, which has never been used again.*

GEORGE: Well, that was something to show the connection, why they had similar powers. It was an accident that the characters were designed at the same time — total coincidence — but that's one of my least favorite, "Lights Out Everyone." Many of the stories with the Hive — particularly the last, "Death of the Hive" — because I was really unhappy with the artwork on that one. The Brother Blood stories tend to be not among my favorites, again because I don't really have a good grasp on that character as Marv does.

There's another favorite I have, and that's "Crossroads." Took care of Kid Flash and changed Robin — it was the last appearance of Robin by Dick Grayson. "Judas Contact" is another favorite. There are others that I like and dislike, but those probably rank high on the list.

ANDY: *What's your favorite — along the "most favorite and least favorite line" — what's your favorite story of any you've done on ANY book, and your least favorite?*

THE JUDAS CONTRACT.

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"SGT. PEPPER is probably the least

GEORGE: As favorites that I've done on *any* book, "Who is Donna Troy?" still is the top one. As far as non-TITAN stories, my first issue of WONDER WOMAN I had a grand time with. And X-MEN ANNUAL #3, written by **Chris Claremont** and inked by **Terry Austin**, I really enjoyed that at the time.

ANDY: *That featured incredible artwork.*

GEORGE: Thank you. Terry did a marvelous ink job, and Chris always does great stories; particularly then — he was going strong, too. And outside of those, JLA #200, only because of the nature of it all. Even though, as much hell as it was to draw, CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. In particular, issue #7, "The Death of Supergirl," and issue #11, "Aftershock," because it was the most personal of the stories.

ANDY: *So what are your least favorites?*

GEORGE: Least favorites that I've done... "Gulliver of Mars," for reasons cited earlier... the "Martian Genesis" story.

ANDY: *SGT. PEPPER'S...?*

GEORGE: SGT. PEPPER is probably the least favorite thing I've ever done in my life. If I were to think most recently, and again taking it to non-TITAN stories, "The Shaggy Man" issue of the JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, I think it was my third JUSTICE LEAGUE.

ANDY: *Inked by Frank McLaughlin.*

GEORGE: The reason I didn't like it, I didn't like the story. I didn't like the real anti-Red sentiment to be so blatant. And it was an "eh" of a story.

ANDY: *What about covers? Least and most?*

GEORGE: That's tough; many of them are based on feeling at the time. Like, I've always had a great fondness for my first "Runaways" cover. I think it expressed mood. I've really enjoyed stuff like that. I'm happy with almost the whole of my entire line of CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS covers; I really worked *hard* on those covers. My last one was my favorite — for issue #12 — because I got to do all the buildings again.

I guess if I was to take my *least* favorite covers, it's probably easier to pinpoint. Let's see now, my first MAN-WOLF, only because it didn't end up looking much like what I really drew — a lot of redrawing was done to correct stuff I'd done wrong. My least favorite TITANS cover was issue #11, with the Hyperion; my light sources were wrong, Donna's hair looked like just one big wad of black, and *never* liked the idea of heads superimposed on a cover like that, which was not my idea. I'm sure there are covers that are even worse than that. I just can't think of them, out of so many covers I've drawn.

ANDY: *Tell me about specific TITANS stories. You only did the cover of "The Titans vs. The Recombatants." Were you planning on originally drawing that story?*

GEORGE: No, actually, I wasn't. I was glad **Steve Rude** got it because his style is suitable for it.

ANDY: *For those who don't know, The Recombatants story was the unofficial crossover with the DNAGENTS.*

GEORGE: My style wasn't going to be as fitting to kind of capture **Will Meugniot's** version of it, but **Steve Rude** was a lot closer and he did a marvelous job.

ANDY: *You expressed displeasure with The Hive Story... why was that? You'd been working up to it for so lons.*

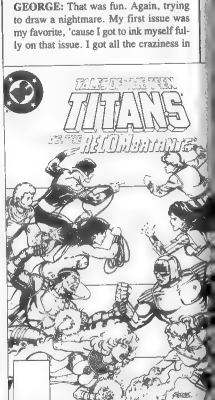
GEORGE: Well, the artwork bothered me, more than anything else. It was my own fault for doing layouts, and **Mike DeCarle** just didn't know the characters and really hadn't enough grasp at drawing faces to make them work. So they all tend to look alike; all the characters tend to look stiff, with Mike's inking style. His work was rather stiff without my full pencils there, and the weaknesses really showed through. And despite all the build-up, it seemed to happen so fast. I think it might have been better thought-out. But Marv and I were concentrating on two TITANS books at the time and that made it a lot tougher.

ANDY: *Was the female leader of Hive your idea?*

GEORGE: No, that was Marv's. I came up with the idea of making her very soft, and he liked that and we worked that together. And I based her face — which is more noticeable on the cover than in the interior, due to Mike's problem with faces — on **Bernadette Peters**. But she looked more like that on the cover than she ever did in the interior.

ANDY: *How did you like the Trigon saga?*

GEORGE: That was fun. Again, trying to draw a nightmare. My first issue was my favorite, 'cause I got to ink myself fully on that issue. I got all the craziness in



favorite thing I've ever done in my life."

Sorry, George.

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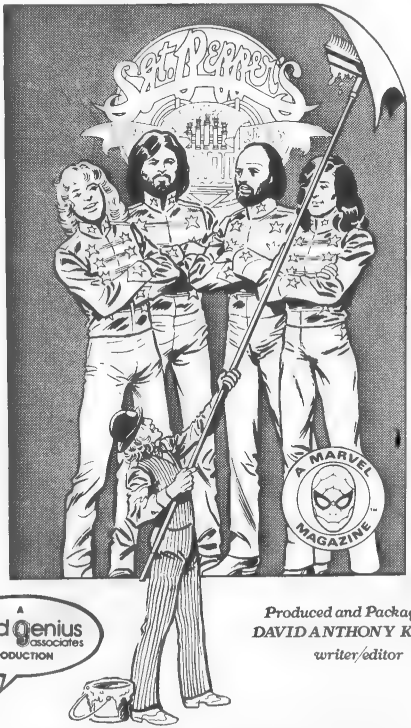

Produced and Packaged by
DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT
writer/editor

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Catch The Wave!

YOUNGBLOOD

By ROB LIEFELD and HANK KANALZ

MEGATON SPECIAL #1

Shipping in October

Introduction by GEORGE PEREZ!

Cover by ROB LIEFELD and JERRY ORDWAY!

MEGATON COMICS

© MEGATON PUBLISHING INC.

"I made gnarled bodies and corpses."

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there, the Bridge of Souls, the gigantic Trigon on the double page...

ANDY: *How long did that take you?*

GEORGE: The Bridge of Souls? Per page, it must have taken a day each. The double-pager took a day, but it was one large figure, so that make it a lot easier to draw. I really enjoyed that one. At the end of the Trigon five-parter, my very next and last TITANS story to date was "We Are Gathered Here Today." It was really a nice change of pace.

ANDY: *After all that hell you got to do a...*

GEORGE: Got to draw a little heaven, really!

ANDY: *Now, mentioning your Trigon series, that's something you're quite good at — drawing the personal nightmares. You did a fantastic Raven sequence in the one, Phobia...*

GEORGE: Yeah, when she was stripped naked down into a —

ANDY: *Both Phobia, and, you know, your Trigon sequences in TITANS Baxter #1, they're all so hellish. Where do you get that weird stuff?*

GEORGE: I don't know. Whatever I'm smoking, it must be good, huh? *(Laughter.)* No, I just let my imagination go wild. I mean you watch enough film and read enough books and dream enough dreams...

The idea for Bridge of Souls was a term that just popped into my head. Originally, when I sketched that out so Marv could script it, it was a rock bridge. It didn't become a bridge of souls until I inked it. But I decided to change my mind, and suddenly made gnarled bodies and corpses all mingled together.

I watched the movie LABYRINTH recently and I can't imagine where these people get the imagination — they have the helping hands that held the woman up there; the idea of a door knocker that can't talk because the ring is in its mouth, or can't hear because the ring is in its ears. These are all such pieces of imagination. And with the art of **M.C. Escher**, your whole visual reference is distorted because he either changes perspective, or changes the entire picture in midstream — it still balances as a design, but the picture is not the same when it finishes as it was when it started. There's no way of really explaining how one does that. It just comes to you; it's gut level, and that's what creation is all about.

ANDY: *You and Marv received a lot of flak for the scene in TITANS Baxter #1 —*

THE MIDNIGHT BOUGHS ARE AS LEAFY PATHWAYS TO ENABLE...
I'VE UNCHAINED YOU, RAVEN-ONE... YOU'RE FREE TO GO.
IS THAT SO??
WELL, MAYBE I DON'T INTEND TO LEAVE UNTIL I GET SOME SATISFACTION!!
...WHO BETRAYAL TO THAT ARCHEMONTIGORO CHAMBER.
PUERILE FOOL! HEAVENUS IS THE SHEER STRENGTH OF SAVAGERY UNPARALLELED!
--SEE?
AND AS SHE SEES...
AND IS THE LOFTY CEILING ABOVE HIS HIDEOUS FORM
A PANEL SLIDES OPEN...
...TO ADMIT LONDAR RAVS--
--RAYS OF PAIN!!
...SHE ...AND CAPTURES MIND ON CHANGE...
...THAT LICK AT THE EDGE MADNESS!! ...WHICH TRIGGERS HIS THROAT!!
...BURN EXRUCIATINGLY THROUGH IT.
...INTO HIS RAW, TORMENTED
...AND TRIGGER AN UNKNOWN, MILLENNIA-OLD...
...INTO A WEIRD, INCAPACITATING BLASPHEMY...
A NIGHTMARE, TABLEAU-ORAL MYTH...
A SLAVERING, MALEVOLENT MAN-WOLF!
WITNESS: THE FURY OF THE NIGHT CREATURE!"—IN FRANKENSTEIN #1(4)
10

From the days when George was doing his earliest color comics work. MAN-WOLF #33, written by DAK.

GEORGE: Not a lot of flak, we received about three or four letters.

ANDY: *We've got to explain this scene, with Dick and Kory in bed.*

GEORGE: Both of *legal* age.

ANDY: *Nowadays, you see the OUTSIDERS and everyone bedding down at the drop of a towel... do you feel somewhat responsible for ushering the "Sexual Age" into DC Comics?*

GEORGE: No, because THE HULK did it before us. There was a scene with Bruce Banner in bed with a girl, and nobody made any fuss about that! During the X-MEN, I believe, Charles Xavier was shown in bed with, uh —

ANDY: *Lilandra?*

GEORGE: Lilandra, that was done before ours, too. No one made a fuss there, either. Ours was up front about it. We didn't try to hide it in a small panel. And it was done specifically to show — as Chris would have done, as well — that these people had a relationship that

Matt Wagner returns to black-and-white . . . and RED!

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Written by Matt Wagner.
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A $22.00 value for just $9.95!

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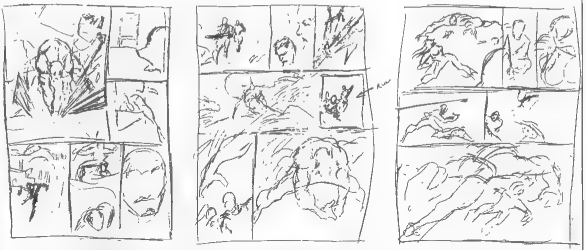
"She would die for that. Not for sex."



BONUS! George's breakdowns for DAK's CREATURES ON THE LOOSE #33, with Man-Wolf.

something *mattered* about. In dealing with the entire thing about Dick and Kory, anything that happened in their relationship was based on the fact that they *were* real, full lovers. If you don't establish that, their relationship is not full, for them. They're both of legal age; we would never have done a scene like that with Changeling. We did do a scene like that with Terra, but she was a villainess and she would die for that. Not die for *sex. (Laughter.)* But, you know, she was a villainess. We're not saying that she is a good person. But no, we would not have done that with Changeling. Dick and Kory were of legal age — and in the case of an alien, what can be legal age? — so we had absolutely no reason to apologize for that. When they reprinted it, they kept the scene intact. As far as the backlash, it seemed like more only because Marv wanted to deal with the actual question. Even though there were very, very few letters about it, Marv wanted to deal with that and state something about it. I think Marv didn't go far enough, myself. But again, I have an opinion on that type of thing, or am more vocal in some respects. Unfortunately, by doing that, it called attention to it, and I think that it probably got more of a backlash of attention brought on by putting it in the letters page than it ever did appearing in the comic, itself.

ANDY: *What's the true story behind Kole and Azrael? Did you create those characters?*

GEORGE: I actually designed it entirely differently. There is a drawing I did of Azrael that doesn't look *anything* like **Jose Luis Garcia Lopez's** version of Azrael. Originally, Marv came up with the idea of an angel at the time I was still on the book. Then, when I left the book, I thought it would be unfair for Jose, with his design sense, that every character he does is based on a **George Perez** design, since Azrael was never printed. So I let him design Azrael, and while he was on the book, he was also entitled to design Kole. Even though Kole was printed in CRISIS before she appeared in TITANS, that was because of the timing — I had gotten the xerox of Jose's pencils. Jose designed both of them. Azrael was originally designed looking totally different, and Jose came up with his own version; he never saw mine. No one has seen mine except for Marv.

ANDY: *Was Kole created to die?*

GEORGE: Yes. I told Marv, "If we create another Teen Titan, then we better create a woman who's going to survive." So far, he's created one new male Titan,

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"I get a very high designer's fee."

he's alive. Creates two female Titans, they *both* die. *(Laughter.)* Something he has about these girls — he's constantly, you know, killing them off.

ANDY: *When you designed Azrael, did you design her with the Harlequin Romance dialog in mind?*

GEORGE: Marv wanted a very, very emotional face. Again, it wasn't all that different from the way I designed Jericho. Jericho was also made for expression. The operatic thing, that got a little carried overboard. I am not as much a lover of deep purple prose, where people are acting like raving idiots over a lover. I mean, to me, love is always as much of the head as of the heart, if you do it right. And that bugged me. But again, that's the character. The character was supposed to be a flying wimp. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Speaking of designing faces, when did you start to change Raven's face solely for the lead in TITANS Baxter #1?*

GEORGE: When we received a letter from someone saying "Hey, you know, I've noticed that the face has been changing, you're making her look almost demonic, was that deliberate?" It wasn't, then, but it became that way from that point on! *(Laughter.)* That's when we decided to use that scene inside TITANS #1, based on that one letter. It started as something I was doing because I was adapting my style. Then I suddenly decided to use a story element. The face was changed, but it wasn't because **George Perez's** style was changing, it was because it was a deliberate change. So it was an accidental deliberate change.

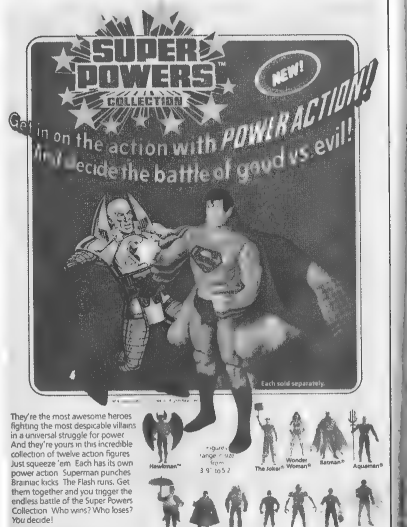
ANDY: *Great! These are the questions that are burning on the minds of TITANS fans everywhere: Do you get royalties on the Lex Luthor and Cyborg SUPERPOWER figures, since you designed both of them?*

GEORGE: Cyborg, I do; Luthor I don't — because the character existed already. I did get a very, very high designer's fee for designing his costume. So they paid me a very large amount of money for what ended up being a fifteen minute job, probably greater than the royalty would have paid me for the character. On Cyborg, I do get royalties.

ANDY: *I have been asked to ask this — do Tamaranians have nipples? You never drew the males with nipples and nobody's ever seen —*

GEORGE: When I drew the Tamaranians, almost every male had armor covering the nipples. So you never really got to see them. But they *do* have nipples.

ANDY: *And could Dick and Kory have a child, seeing that she is an alien?*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GEORGE: As far as I'm concerned, they can have an offspring. As to what it would be called — it would not be a child as we would know it. What do I know? I've never seen a pregnant Tamaranian; I don't even know how she births. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Well, as a result of CRISIS, TITANS was changed somewhat. Now that, for instance, Kandor never even existed, where did Nightwing get the inspiration for his costume?*

GEORGE: From the Batman. It could have just been a nickname he came up with some time ago. You can devise anything, as far as that's concerned. Our big problem is "Who the hell is Donna Troy?" Now that Wonder Woman is starting all over, who the hell *is* Donna Troy?

ANDY: *I was getting to that! So how does Wonder Girl exist — if Wonder Woman never did?*

GEORGE: Since I'm now the plotter or co-plotter of *both* books, Marv and I will work out something.

ANDY: *So you don't have any plans just yet?*

GEORGE: No, but it'll be a crossover between WONDER WOMAN and SPOTLIGHT with Wonder Girl, and obviously I would draw both. Beyond that, we haven't decided what. When I actually get back on the TITANS, Marv and I will work on that.

ANDY: *So what happened to the infamous and much delayed TITANS party issue involving Changeling's dreams?*

GEORGE: Ah, yeah... unfortunately, we never got around to it.

"Marv's writing suffered during that period."

ANDY: *How come?*

GEORGE: I don't know. My schedule got so busy. It would be kind of nice still, only because we sure could use a little bit of laughter out of the TITANS. But as to when, I don't know.

ANDY: *You just brought up the point that "we sure could use some laughter in the TITANS." You claimed that you didn't feel the TITANS would go down in quality when you left the book. How do you feel about the TITANS post-Perez?*

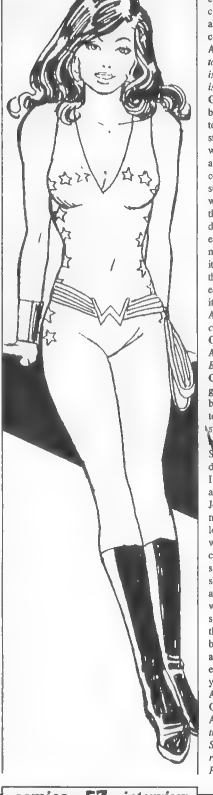
GEORGE: I think one thing that's really absent is the real camaraderie and rapport Marv and I had together on the book. Marv and I are not the same person bound at the hip — we have different points of view — and it was that feeling of compromise, of getting our own identities in there, that made the TITANS what they are. I think the sole burden being on Marv, he comes up with fine stories, but the art never carries it; the characters never act in character and, in turn, they can't be written as much in character. It's not the same. It's like trying to breathe life into a statue — as opposed to building it from the heart out.

ANDY: *What do you think about Kory's marriage?*

GEORGE: I disagreed with that. I would probably have done a lot to argue against that particular story, and particularly against the resolution. Whether I would have won, I don't know; again, with Marv and I, it was always a series of compromises. But I definitely would have fought that. I found a lot of that story bothersome. And again, on the importance of the timing of it, everyone... all the other characters were going through hell at the same time, so it just seemed like more melodrama upon melodrama. And Marv was heavily involved in CRISIS, which is why I think his writing suffered during that period, and I think he admits that.

ANDY: *You also gave Donna Troy this amazing amount of sensitivity and grace. What do you think of the new, selfish Donna, who throws people through walls at the drop of a hat?*

GEORGE: A lot of that, again, was the artist's fault. Marv says to have this person get thrown, and they get thrown against the wall, she would never do that — but, then again, I *know* Donna and I would never have allowed that to happen. **Eduardo Barretto** doesn't know the character. He's a *fine* artist — a very fine artist — but he does not know the characters. When I did the cover of that particular issue, I had Dick Grayson against a glass mirror. I would never have him against a broken wall — he couldn't go through that, he'd be dead! I know the characters. There's a certain logic in the characters. Eduardo doesn't know them as well. And that's one of the reasons I'm coming back.



ANDY: *Did you and Marv plan for Dick to be under Brother Blood's influence from issue #22 of the original TITANS series to issue 1?*

GEORGE: Marv said he did plan it, I believe he did. Unfortunately, he forgot to mention it when he started that storyline. Again, if I had known it, I would have asked about it. Eduardo didn't ask, he didn't know and, frankly, didn't care at that point — so he did what he was supposed to do. As a good artist, he does what he's supposed to do, because he's not the co-creator. He doesn't question, as I do. When I was on CRISIS, I questioned. I always question a script if it doesn't make sense to me. And work hard to make it make sense. So Marv did have it planned that way, but neglected to have it mentioned early enough so people wouldn't think it was coming out of the blue.

ANDY: *Did you have a hand at all in creating the Vanguard or the Hybrid?*

GEORGE: Absolutely none. None at all.

ANDY: *What did you think of John Byrne's TEEN TITANS story for ACTION?*

GEORGE: I think it's great. I think it's grand. I love it. The faces on the girls bothered me a little, 'cause again I've got too much of a personal stake in them. I'm sure if I drew some of his characters he'd have a preference — like how he'd draw Superman, as opposed to how I would draw Superman, that type of thing. But I loved it. I thought it was fresh and vital; a lot more fresh and vital than I'd seen John in a long time. I think he did a marvelous job there. He also kept them looking young, which is really nice; they would look young and cute. Some people complain about Donna dressing the way she did but, hey, she's a teenager. And she's entitled to dress that way sometimes, and she was in her own house. She wouldn't go to *business* that way, but I felt she looked pretty. Kory I think was a little too hard looking; I told that to John, but Jose took care of that. I think John did a marvelous job on it. I was very pleased. And he makes Gar look nice and young again.

ANDY: *Yes. They were happy...*

GEORGE: Um-hum!

ANDY: *A happy TITANS story! What was the character that popped up in TITANS SAMPLER #2, who was in a light blue and red costume — I've heard she's called Polara?*

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"Most of the stuff that people assumed

© 1987 Perez

GEORGE: Actually, her name was, at the time, something like . . . I don't remember now. Originally it was supposed to be Francis Kane. There were a lot of plans for that sampler, which was done just before I ended up leaving the TITANS book, including a black woman as opposed to the Japanese woman who ended up in CRISIS. For all the plans that Marv and I had, once I left, Marv went his way and the superpowered Francis Kane never quite got anywhere.

ANDY: *Was the full costume designed, or . . .*

GEORGE: No, just what you saw in the sampler.

ANDY: *What were your feelings on TITANS #39, the issue where Kid Flash and Robin quit?*

GEORGE: Oh, I thought it was great. A very, very good story. I thought it was one of our better stories, particularly following issue #38, "Who is Donna Troy?" It was about time, and I thought it was a great turning point for the book.

ANDY: *Did you feel awkward about retiring characters that had been around longer than you?*

GEORGE: In the case of Robin, not as much, since it had been discussed for such a long time at DC that it really was anticlimatic. I went over it a number of times laying it out, drawing it, inking it, and having to co-plot it. So by the time it came to actually finishing it, he had retired about four times in my mind. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *On to CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS, then. You've worked in various media for your TITANS work — watercolor for the TITANS ANNUAL #1, markers for the poster, colored pencils, pastels, etc. When are we going to see the debut of airbrush or Craft Tint?*

GEORGE: Actually, I had used airbrush on the TITANS cover with Cheshire. The green field and the black field were airbrushed. I've had more bad experiences with airbrushes, so I've pretty much have bowed away from it — it tended to be a little unwieldy for me, I don't have the patience or the control for it. So that one I avoid. As far as Craft Tint is concerned, I tried to get some but in the stores around me, I couldn't find any . . unless they have it under a different name and I'm just using a brand name that they don't have. So never having found any, I've made up for it by doing a lot of cross-hatching manually. Most of the stuff that people assumed was a Zip-A-Tone or a Craft Tint pattern were all done by hand.

ANDY: *Do you ever see yourself trying a totally new art style, a la Bill Sienkiewicz?*

GEORGE: Not to that degree, only because my style is just not the same. Bill has a certain way of doing it, as does **Frank Miller** and all. Mine is more the romantic style, I'm less impressionistic than romantic. I like to put all the details in. The furthest I go in getting away from comic-book style is more the *art nouveau* style; **Alphonse Mucha** was a big influence on my style. Beyond that I enjoy the amount of detail work that I put into my work. It's part of my style, I think; to change that radically might be something for the far future, but at this point I have no real desire. Sometimes I do stuff more with blacks than I used to, in order to kind of relax the eye, so detail isn't the only thing there. And using open area a little more. But no, my style is pretty much the style I enjoy doing.

ANDY: *You didn't like the Flexograph press much that was used on WHO'S WHO #1 and #2 and CRISIS #1, did you?*

GEORGE: I hated it with a passion. *(Laughter.)* It destroyed what work **Dick Giordano** and I had done on the first issue of CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. I was infuriated with it. As it turned out, DC had seen copies of it, but they had seen good copies of the Flexograph sent to them. Having never seen a Flexograph copy of it at the office since, I wasn't there, the first I saw was a couple of copies in a comic store — and was so disgusted I put it right back in the rack. I wouldn't even take the copy home, I was so angry. The next day, since it was already too late to call the office, I called DC pretty much in a rage, and they really were confused as to why I was so angry. As I described it, it looked like a bad color Xerox of crayons. And they were concerned, wondering why I was so upset; they didn't think it came out that bad, and so it was quite obvious that they had seen different copies than I had. And Marv Wolfman went, I believe the following day, into

was Zip-a-Tone was all done by hand."

another comic store and checked it out and he called up the office and said, "George is right, this thing is *terrible* here!" And I didn't want to push my weight around, but if the second issue was printed the same way as the first issue was, they'd be finding an artist for the third issue. I just couldn't see myself doing that; I was never so happy to see standard comic-book reproduction as I was when I saw the interior of issue #2 of CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Did you ever wish that the series was on Baxter paper or anything?*

GEORGE: Of course, of course. But I knew the economics, it was really impossible, so I accepted the restrictions that we could only get a standard comic out of it. So that's what I was doing, that's what I was going for. The Flexograph caught me totally by surprise, because that wasn't what the book was originally drawn for. To be fair, all the Flexograph printing that had been done by the company before had been on books that had a much smaller print run, and those tend to come out a little better. A book with the gigantic print run of CRISIS was something they'd never experienced before. And, because of inclement weather, no one at DC could go to the printers for quality control of CRISIS. So the book came out sight unseen. And of course, everyone ended up regretting that. Unfortunately, that's history now; there's no way you could ever salvage what happened to CRISIS #1. Thankfully, it didn't adversely affect sales of the book.

ANDY: *Do you think DC will ever do a paperback version or anything, so we will see how beautiful CRISIS #1 really did look?*

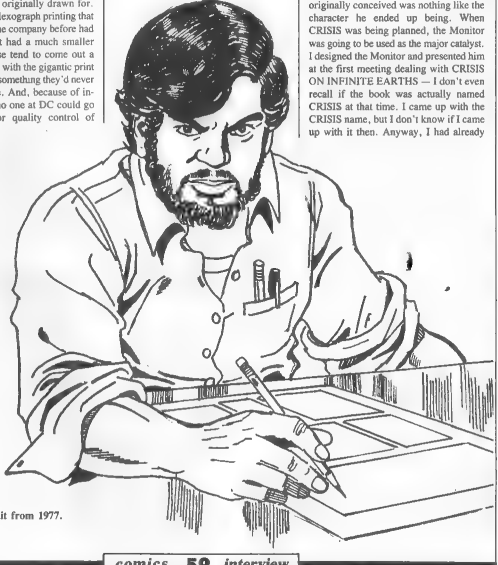
GEORGE: I can't speak for the company, but I myself don't see the logic of it, now that so much has been changed since CRISIS. All that would confuse anyone who picks it up as a new book. So I can't see the company printing it; there's no logical reason for it.

ANDY: *The main hero and villain of CRISIS were both the Monitor. When you first drew him in the original TEEN TITANS #22, did you know what he was going to look like?*

GEORGE: I hadn't the faintest idea. In fact, I don't believe Marv or I — particularly Marv, who came up with the concept of the character — had any idea that his job would be so far-reaching as it ended up being in CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. I assumed that he was a character being used strictly to kind of explain how all these villains always end up with all these henchmen. And that was all I knew about him. So, like, I hadn't the faintest idea when I designed the ship that it would end up becoming such an important part of each issue's continuity.

ANDY: *Tell us how the specific main characters in CRISIS were created.*

GEORGE: Again, the Monitor as originally conceived was nothing like the character he ended up being. When CRISIS was being planned, the Monitor was going to be used as the major catalyst. I designed the Monitor and presented him at the first meeting dealing with CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS — I don't even recall if the book was actually named CRISIS at that time. I came up with the CRISIS name, but I don't know if I came up with it then. Anyway, I had already



Self-portrait from 1977.

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"I usually show an alien by the eyes."

designed the Monitor, at that point, so that everyone could have a character design sheet. This was before I decided *not* to have the Monitor shown until CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. There were a few pages in some books — I think there was an issue of SUPERMAN where Curt Swan drew the Monitor and then they had to ink him in silhouette because we didn't want to show the character. Only one place did it escape and that was, I believe, in a G.I. COMBAT, where the character *was* kept intact. 'Cause no one at the time knew that they weren't supposed to be showing the Monitor. That meeting got a lot of people confused, including me, because I had no idea no one was supposed to know, either. I think one of the influences in designing him was the High Evolutionary, from the Marvel Comics WARLOCK series. Basically, that same type of almost-Roman face, looking like he's wearing a variation on a Roman skirt with a cape. He was very, very regal looking. Horn braids for hair was something to give a totally different visual. Facially, he ended up being influenced by actor **Torrin Thatcher** who played the villain in both THE SEVEN VOYAGES OF SINBAD and JACK THE GIANT KILLER.

ANDY: *How did the Anti-Monitor, his antithesis, come about?*

GEORGE: Initially, all I did was do a corrupt, almost inhuman, semi-robotic version of the Monitor. In drawing the shadow demons I designed in a shape like the Monitor, so when I designed the Anti-Monitor I also kept it that way. But that was more an afterthought — it wasn't planned at the outset of the series what the Anti-Monitor was going to look like. Marv didn't know what the Anti-Monitor looked like, until he saw the page in issue #5 where he was introduced. Which explains why, in all the silhouette shots in front of the viewscreen of his black ship, he doesn't bear the same silhouette he ordinarily would. He was just an afterthought. The only reason his costume was changed after it was destroyed by Supergirl was that I realized that, designing him the way I did, he was really a hard character to show in action. He was so robotic. All the joints were kind of soldered together -- the shoulder looked pretty much stiffened against the elbow and everything else. He looked impressive standing, but he really couldn't move well. So after destroying his shell in issue #7, I created a more mobile Anti-Monitor for issue #8, so he could look still horrific but practical as far as being able to show movement.

ANDY: *How about Lyla or Harbinger?*

GEORGE: Harbinger? Well, originally when I designed her, I had designed Lyla to be more a TITANS character, I believe. As I recall, I think it was probably "Murder Machine," in the second annual. Originally, I had made Lyla to be just one of many women who was in this ship with the Monitor. Since I didn't draw any interior of the ship beyond that point, once I left the book Marv decided to have Lyla be basically the *only* woman inside the ship. So she was constantly repeated; it was always the same woman, as opposed to my original plan to put different women in there. When CRISIS was discussed, Marv decided to use this woman, who was an afterthought at the time. When I first drew her into the ship, Marv did not indicate a woman inside the Monitor's ship; he just indicated "the interior of the ship" and I gave him what I considered to be one of many secretaries — and from there it kind of grew, so she developed more of a personality, as Marv kept on doing more with her.

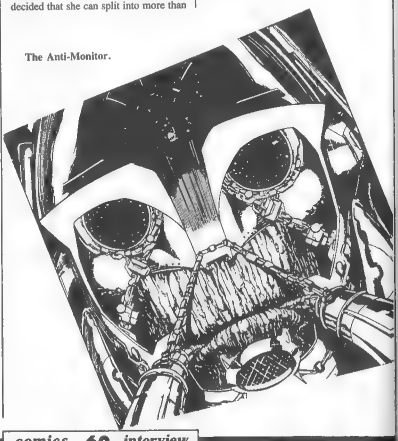
By the time CRISIS came along, she became a totally different character, the Harbinger. It was Marv's idea to give her that power. All I contributed was the costume and the fact that Marv and I decided that she can split into more than one person, and keep the identity intact. My little gimmick, which I usually do for a lot of characters, is to show an alien by doing something with the eyes — giving her cat's eyes, just so she has those when she's the Harbinger, but not when she's Lyla. Lyla has an ordinary Earth woman's eyes

ANDY: *How about Pariah?*

GEORGE: Pariah was basically Marv's creation. I just developed a costume. In hindsight, I probably got a little carried away with the billowy sleeves and the metallic belt, 'cause it tended to be the same gimmick I used for Jericho of the Titans. Basically, just to have someone who looks like a scientist on — I thought it was another planet, but Marv wrote it as another Earth. That caught me off guard. Facially, I based him on a young **Peter O'Toole**. And again, to show his different changes, reversed the eyes, so that the black was around the white pupil. When Marv ended up writing the character as a man from another dimensional Earth, I in turn did draw him with normal eyes until he became Pariah.

ANDY: *How about the final two, Lady Quark and Alexander Luthor?*

GEORGE: Initially, Lady Quark was



The Anti-Monitor.

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"I believe I'd seen Jim Starlin do it."

TH-THERE'S HOPE... THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE...
TIME TO SAVE THE WORLD!
TIME... BACK IN TIME...
DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO...WE MUST SAVE THE WORLD...
...WE MUST SAVE THE WORLD...
MY CANNON!- HE HAS DESTROYED MY CANNON!

supposed to have died the same issue as Lord Volt and Princess Fern. Marv decided against that, after he initially came up with it, because he didn't want to destroy everyone and, also, he wanted to fulfill the promise of CRISIS by having some new characters created. Since I thought Lady Quark was going to be killed off, I designed a very simple costume for her, as opposed to spending a lot of time on a costume I wouldn't get to draw again. *(Laughter.)* Inspiration for her, incredibly enough, was that TV show AUTO MAN — which was a terrible TV show. His costume was obviously in some kind of a blue or black Spandex, and special effects were projected onto him through a double exposure or computer graphics. So you have cosmic energy inside the costume, itself. I thought that was an interesting visual. I gave her very short hair, making the clothing standard of that particular Earth almost a reversal of Earth as we know it, where the women tend to wear the pants and the men wear the skirts. I kept her hair close cropped also to establish the fact that she's definitely a woman — at least when I drew her — who was in her late 40s or very early 50s, to establish that she is an older woman.

ANDY: *And Luthor Four?*

GEORGE: Luthor's "cosmic effect" was almost based on the same inspiration that gave Lady Quark her cosmic look. But in the case of Alex Luthor, again, I wasn't sure what Marv intended for the character — whether he was going to be gotten rid of in the last issue — so I just decided to take the red hair, made it long to give it almost a messianic look, and just played it from there. The golden costume was just something to put him in; I didn't want to put him into regular clothing. *(Laughter.)* There was no real thinking involved in the designing of Alex Luthor. The cosmic effect was something that wasn't even original. I believe I'd seen **Jim Starlin** do it with Captain Marvel.

ANDY: *Who provided the real-life basis for the characters? You've mentioned a couple, but Lady Quark to me looks exactly like Annie Lennox and Luthor looks sort of like Richard Simmons.*

GEORGE: Alex Luthor, I really had no basis. In the case of Lady Quark, she was based on **Cloris Leachman**, when she cuts her hair short. She's very attractive, but obviously she's an older woman. Lady Quark was based on **Cloris Leachman**; when other people draw her, since they tend to draw her a little younger than she should be, she might look more like **Annie Lennox**. But that wasn't my original intention.

ANDY: *You mentioned earlier, when talking about the Titans, that Dr. Light was originally to be black. What made you change your mind there?*

GEORGE: Well, because of the Captain Marvel character over at Marvel, it was becoming too much of a cliche; already, they had one major character who was originally a white male superhero and now became a black female superheroine — and whose power also had something to do with light or energy. When doing the new Dr. Light, we did want to make a female; since we were killing so many females, we needed a new one. I came up with the thing of her becoming Japanese, and Marv liked the idea, he had no problem with that. So that's why Dr. Light became a Japanese.

ANDY: *You signed the cover to CRISIS #3 as "Guess Who?" Why was that?*

GEORGE: With all the craziness and all the detail, if they actually couldn't figure out who drew it, something was definitely wrong with the people buying the book. So I just did that to have a little fun. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *You drew some fairly gruesome scenes in CRISIS of the Flash disintegrating — getting a little gore past the Comics Code — and you had the Flash's time holes (I guess you could call*

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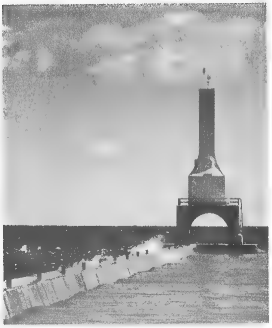

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"I decided to ink it myself so they'd know."

them) in mind before Marv did, right?

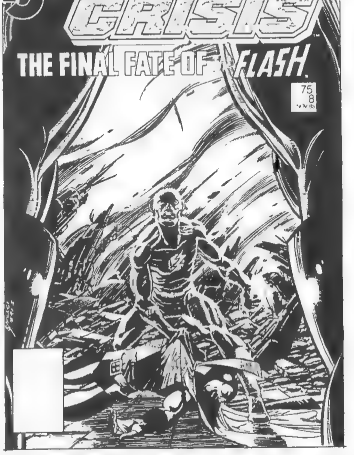
GEORGE: Um-hum. Well, the time hole was basically, again, a gimmick. The time hole thing, when we did 'em in the first couple of issues, Marv was still fully plotting the book — so I was never really getting a grasp as to what was going on. By the time issue #8 came along, I was already way into plotting the book with Marv, so when I did the death of the Flash, I told him that I was going to show the scenes where he talked to Batman when he had appeared in front of the Titans and the Outsiders. Unbeknownst to anyone, including Marv and myself at the time, we actually did show the death of the Flash as far back as issue #2. So technically that *was* where he died. The one thing that tossed Marv for a loop, 'cause I didn't fully explain it to him when I drew it, was drawing the Kid Flash *future* jump in there as well — the fact that Flash is zig-zagging in and out, that caught Marv off guard. He didn't know exactly when the Kid Flash sequence occurred until I drew it into issue #12. Then he realized what was going on. "Oh, that's why!" *(Laughter.)* So we had to make sure that the dialog matched, and I had to make sure that I had put a scene in there where he would repeat the dialog he spoke in issue #8.

ANDY: *You also inked some of the first three issues, most notably the Alexander Luthor figure. How come you did that?*

GEORGE: Because it was very hard to translate what I wanted on Alex Luthor correctly in pencil form. So I decided for the first few shots to ink it myself, so when anyone else follows it they'd know *exactly* what I wanted on the Alex Luthor figure. It's very hard to do white on black with pencil, so I inked it strictly to make it easier. And many times I would do other panels only because I have a certain idea of what I want them to look like and, rather than having the inker misinterpret what I want, I would do it myself. Some of those things are so ink-oriented that it'd be awfully hard to try to indicate it in pencil so that they could understand exactly what I wanted in ink. Like when the Anti-Monitor first takes control over one of the Harbingers — that entire panel done in black and white, that whole effect was something I could never have translated into pencil. The shot of Firestorm flying over the city would have taken so long just to draw in pencil, it may as well have been in ink. And every shot of the symbol of Arion, the mystic symbol, was inked by me in order to make it as easy as possible for Dick or whoever was doing that particular part of the book not to be confused by overlapping lines, especially if they're not familiar with the Arion symbol. So I inked that myself. And in some cases, like the first page of the series, it was a type of effect with the overlaying of the Zip-A-Tone into two different formats. It was a little tricky, and again, I couldn't translate that into pencil. The only reason I inked the very last page of issue #12 was because I inked the very first page of issue #1. It seemed like a nice way to finish off the book by inking the last page since I had inked the first.

ANDY: *Well, something I — and probably everyone else — have noticed is you're very conscientious about how the characters look and act when you draw them. This is really evident in CRISIS, where everybody looks and acts like they do in their own book. Especially the Blue Beetle and Captain Marvel. How did you do the research on the different characters?*

GEORGE: **Bob Greenberger** and/or sometimes myself would go through stories, and provide the references that I needed, and finding who was most synonymous with the character, as far as art chores were concerned. There are certain cliches that all artists use, certain things that make an artist's style. And I utilized these things when I drew scenes with the **Blue Beetle**, I gave him very much of that whole ballet thing, flipping around and very agile, because that goes with the character. When I drew Darkseid, how else could I draw him but the big, dynamic character that **Jack Kirby** designed? And in some cases, some characters were not as easily defined — like the Sea Devils or Lori Lemaris — no real identity of their own beyond whatever artist at the time did it. So I just took whatever I figured worked for them, gave them a personality I figured suited them based on what I remembered, and worked from there.



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"I knew when Marv was making a mistake."

ANDY: *You made a mistake, though, in CRISIS #10, of the Molder appearing, which you'll probably never live down.*

GEORGE: That doesn't bother me at all. It was one of those type of things. It wasn't **Bob Greenberger's** fault — I was looking to find any kind of villain I could find, and found an old issue of THE AMAZING WORLD OF DC COMICS. And just looking through an old cover I saw this villain battling the Flash and took him right off there; I had no idea what the story was inside

ANDY: *In reality the villain was the Elongated Man in disguise.*

GEORGE: So it was one of those type of things. In a book of that size and nature, I was definitely not going to be upset if I got one thing like that wrong. I was always more upset if someone gave me erroneous information, 'cause then I'm following someone and I'll be blamed for it. If I did it wrong, then I'll take the blame for it. As long as no one else is telling me to do something they say is right and then I find out it was wrong — *that* bothers me.

ANDY: *Well, what happened with the scenes between CRISIS #3 and #4 with Harbinger preparing to kill the Monitor? Did both you and Marv forget, or . . .*

GEORGE: That was during the time when Marv was writing the book solely on his own and when I had gotten the plot, I noticed that Marv had inadvertently ended issue #4 with the same exact scene he ended issue #3 — and totally forgot that he ended issue #3 that way. Suddenly, the Harbinger was in a totally different area; she was never threatening the Monitor at all. I pointed it out to Marv; he never caught it; no one in production caught it. So I said, well, since the Monitor does not get whacked until issue #4, I have to have her hit him in issue #4. And the end of issue #3 was already drawn, showing her ready to blast him. So they were going to make it definitely a viewscreen — she is looking at the Monitor through a viewscreen — but with no real redrawing that it probably should have had, it became way too vague and became a confusing thing. She was supposed to be noticeably seeing him as a viewscreen image, so when she's threatening, she's not threatening him personally; she's threatening to do it, but not until issue #4. Unfortunately, I realized that no one was going to edit Marv, since Marv's reputation is so overwhelming. Since **Bob Greenberger** was rather new to the book, and new to DC at the time, he didn't feel like he should be telling Marv **Wolfman** how to write. Maybe Marv had a better understanding, and it was deliberately designed. But having worked with Marv, I knew when Marv was being vague and when Marv was making a mistake. That was a mistake.

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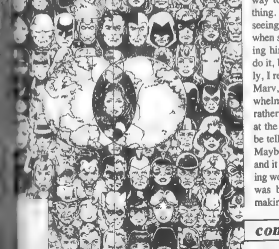

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And that's when I realized that things were going haywire and halfway through issue #5 I was starting to do more and more; by issue #6, I began collaborating with him totally.

ANDY: *Marv has said he gave you a plan for the cover of CRISIS #5 which had only three heads, and some exploding Earths . . .*

GEORGE: Yeah, three or four heads.

ANDY: *When it came out, it had 98 heads and some exploding Earths!*

GEORGE: Marv had done it at the urging of my wife, who said, "Please give him a simple cover to do." And yes, it had only three heads. Unfortunately, when I was going through it, which three heads was I going to draw? *(Laughter.)* With a cast that large, how was I to show three heads, since none of them in the story would have been more important than any other character? So I thought, maybe I'll add *this* head, and finally split it into Earth I and Earth II. I lined them up in rows and tiers, then I started putting little characters

"I never read any of the SECRET WARS,

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in between them. And just kept adding on and on. . . . *(Laughter.)* But Marv tried to make it easy. Everyone thought when the design came in originally that, okay, it'll be one of the simpler covers. And obviously it ended up not being so. Which also explains why issue #6's cover was just a gigantic shot of the Monitor's head. After doing so many covers with so many characters, I deliberately gave a much simpler design. Issue #7 has all the characters. Issue #8 only had Flash with the Monitor and Psycho Pirate. Issue #9 had all the villains. Issue #10 had a lot of characters — but they were a lot smaller and in a wider space than the villains cover. Issue #11 was segmented, so it had all the characters kind of split up and that made a different design, of course, and issue #12 also had a lot of characters — and a lot of buildings in the background. I tried to balance them, so it wasn't all the same.

ANDY: *Some little nitpicky things about CRISIS. . . Marv said there was one panel in which the Marvel Universe was destroyed. Where was that?*

GEORGE: I don't know. Marv mentioned it to me; I didn't draw it that way . . . it was obviously something he decided as an afterthought. I have no idea what he's talking about, as far as where that is. . .

ANDY: *Did you catch, in SECRET WARS II #9, where the Beyonder caused the CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS?*

GEORGE: I never read any of the SECRET WARS, so. . . if they did that, well, hunh . . . you know. . . . *(Laughter.)* I never read it.

ANDY: *Good for you! Also, in CRISIS #9, page 12, you show Clark Kent changing into Superman, and he's wearing what appears to be a Legion flight ring.*

GEORGE: I didn't put it down in the notes so Jerry didn't understand it. That wasn't a Legion flight ring, that was a tribute to **George Reeves**. **George Reeves** wore a pinky ring when he was dressed as Clark Kent, since that was his own ring; he always took it off when he played Superman. But it was basically a tribute to **George Reeves**, who for a lot of generations is the one person everyone always thinks of as Superman. That was strictly a tribute.

ANDY: *Can you explain what happened with the startling similarities with the CRISIS #7 cover to X-MEN #136 — which, in turn, looked like LOIS LANE #128?*

GEORGE: Well, that was incredible sheer coincidence. I didn't even notice it until BUYER'S GUIDE or someplace showed both covers, and I thought, "My God!" It's an incredible resemblance. My main influence in doing that was a cover of THOR, where Odin is holding the body of his son. . . that was *my* inspiration for

so. . . if they did that, well. . . you know."

that cover. I didn't know or remember the X-MEN cover, and haven't the faintest idea when people mention a LOIS LANE cover, *which* cover they're talking about. So there was definitely a comic-book inspiration there — but not the one that everyone *thinks* it is!

ANDY: *So that was totally all a coincidence then?*

GEORGE: Totally. I was rather stunned because the emotional expression on Cyclops and Superman were so similar. Now that *was* a sheer coincidence. Supergirl and Phoenix are both facing the same way, their head on the same side of the page, so it's like. . . a *weird* coincidence. The one exception being not on a single one of the covers that people mention did any other artist go as crazy in drawing that many characters in the background. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Definitely! The Monitor Tapes in CRISIS #10 and the cover to WHO'S WHO #17 and your TITANS "Spotlight" advertisment are all reproduced directly from your pencils, as were segments from the first five TITANS Baxter books. Are you planning on doing more art in this style?*

GEORGE: If they screen it right. They screened the Monitor Tapes totally incorrectly. Originally, I had drawn it so they could be reproduced as lines. They ended up screening it, so a lot of the line work ended up breaking up into dot patterns. I wasn't as happy with that at all. If they're breaking up to dots why would I go to so much trouble to draw these vertical and horizontal line textures? I could have done it in shades of grey. I would like to do more stuff with tone and, in fact, I'm doing a picture of Wonder Woman for the HISTORY portfolio that *is* being done with grey tones, since they told us we're going to have a very good screening so we can do things like that. But definitely, I'd love to do more stuff like that. I'd love to do stuff in full color. Having the opportunity and having the reproduction, if I do a graphic novel I'd like to do stuff where I'd show emphasis on a time change, to do something in black-and-white tone and then juxtapose it with things in color. Not an original idea, but something I'd like to try myself.

ANDY: *How was the decision to make Wally West the Flash reached?*

GEORGE: Basically, they just ran out of what they could think of. After trying to figure out a new Flash, they realized they weren't getting anywhere. One idea was unacceptable, another idea was unacceptable, and the end of the series was starting to come up. We needed *something*. They couldn't think of a new Flash that would be unique unto him or herself, so unfortunately they decided to go for Wally West as the Flash. Which was a logical thing, but what bothered me is that technically we just killed the costume, because he's the same basic character and anyone who picks up the book without any real knowledge of who Wally West or Barry Allen were is going to immediately think it's the same character. So there was no real reason in my mind to have killed him off, since all you did was technically kill off Barry Allen, who was not the problem — you kept the Flash, who supposedly *was* the problem. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *I see. Any final thoughts on CRISIS then?*

GEORGE: It was that same unfortunate confusion at the end of the series — the company having to decide what we could do, what we could not do, what wouldn't be done, what would be done — that made

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"Marv Wolfman is responsible for getting both

I'M GONNA MAKE A FORTUNE RECYCLING THESE INTO LAMPS!
IT'S REALLY A PLEASURE MEETING YOU. I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
I'M NOT SURE WE CAN, EITHER. JUST ONE QUESTION, THO--
--WHO ARE YOU?
POST NO BILLS

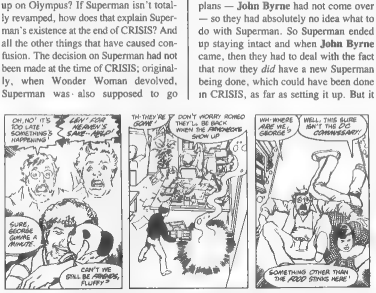
Marv and George meet the Teen Titans.

some of the problems that existed later. Like, if there's only one Wonder Woman, who is this Wonder Woman who ended up on Olympus? If Superman isn't totally revamped, how does that explain Superman's existence at the end of CRISIS? And all the other things that have caused confusion. The decision on Superman had not been made at the time of CRISIS; originally, when Wonder Woman devolved, Superman was also supposed to go through a similar type thing — but they decided, no, we don't want to take a chance. At the time, they had no definite plans — **John Byrne** had not come over — so they had absolutely no idea what to do with Superman. So Superman ended up staying intact and when **John Byrne** came, then they had to deal with the fact that now they *did* have a new Superman being done, which could have been done in CRISIS, as far as setting it up. But it was too late at that point.

ANDY: *How has your relationship with Marv changed over the last five years that you've been working so closely together?*

GEORGE: Well, obviously, we've become friends. We really didn't get to know each other during the time we were at Marvel, because I worked as an artist while he was edstor for awhile. We never worked together on a hands-on basis — we only did one story and one shorter story — one for a WHAT IF? and one for a FANTASTIC FOUR anuual — together in the entire time we were over at Marvel Comics. When I went to TITANS, it was at his request. It's interesting that **Marv Wolfman** is responsible for getting both **George Perez** and **John Byrne** over to DC Comics. Once the NEW TEEN TITANS book started going, particularly once I got more involved with the actually plotting, Marv and I became friends, as well. He was at my wedding; I've been over at his house . . . it became a friendly relationship. Also we started to think alike as far as the TITANS was concerned, so it was a good working relationship. And because neither one of us was working on our first hit series — he had had critical success on TOMB OF DRACULA, plus he had written most of the top line books, and I had drawn many of the top line books at Marvel — it wasn't like we had to worry about our egos. The TEEN TITANS success was great; we loved it, and were appreciative of it, but it wasn't either of our first successes. Our egos didn't get in the way. I think a lot of our chemistry was based on the fact that we cared more for the characters than whether either of our individual contributions overpowered the other's.

ANDY: *On a totally different subject here, you did three in-pack comics for Atari's*


OH, NO! IT'S TOO LATE! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!
I KNEW JOSE ALVARO'S GANG--AGAIN!
SURE, SECOND, WHERE'S ARMORR?
CAN'T WE STILL BE FRIENDS, FLUFFY?
TH-THEY'RE GONE!
DON'T WORRY, ROMEO THEY'LL BE BACK WHEN THE ARMORR'S SHOW UP
WH-WHERE ARE WE? CACKOLIS?
WELL, THIS SURE ISN'T THE D.D. COMMISSARY!
SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE JOOD STINKS HERE!
SO, YOU'VE BEEN TO EARTH-ONE BEFORE, EH?
THEN YOU KNOW WE HAVE ALL SORTS OF SCIENTIFIC GOBBLY-GOOK WEAPONS
SAY A WHAT?
DEATH RAYS!
YOU WASTE AND DRAIN THE TEEN TITANS YOU WILL TELL ME ALL THEIR SECRETS!
NO WAY, JOSE! NEVER!
BEEP! ON THE OTHER HAND!
TOO LATE, FOUR-EYES!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY GOOD BUDDY, MY PAL, MY TALENTED PARTNER--
--AND THE CLOWN WHO MADE ALL THESE LIES?
IT PAYS! DADDY GAVE ME HOUR 2 ANSWER THAT...
THE GAS WAS I'LL DO NO YOU, CHUMS.
BOY, THIS'LL MAKE A GREAT SPECIAL EFFECT WHEN I WAKE UP
I WAS...I WOKE UP, WON'T I?
1
2

me and John Byrne over to DC Comics."

AH, PERFECT IN EVERY DETAIL!
NOTHING CAN STOP ME FROM ACCOMPLISHING MY TASK, NOW!
HOW CAN ANY MEMBER OF THE BATTALION STOP ME....
WHEN EVEN THEIR MOST TRICKY TRAPS HAVE BEEN SO POORLY GUARDED & LAIRED...
IS PLAIN KNOWLEDGE TO ME!?
BUT I'VE STILL TO DECIDE WHICH IT WILL BE — THE ONE I JUST DID...
...OR ONE OF THE OTHER ARCHIVALS!
WELL, THAT ENDS ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT! HA!! THESE AMERICAN SUPER-HEROES WILL BE NO MATCH FOR A MASTER SUCH AS I!

© 1987 Perez

CONGRATULATIONS! You've reached the midway point of this interview. As a bonus, we're reprinting the opening pages of the only full comic book ever done by George — THE BATTALION.

"Marv and I became friends. He was at

SWORDQUEST games, which you co-designed with Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway. Tell us about that project. It didn't do too well, did it?

GEORGE: Well, even though the comics we were pretty happy with, it was a terrible game. I mean, when you say "co-designed," I co-designed the comic -- but I had absolutely *nothing* to do with the game. I don't play video games, and I have absolutely no knowledge about that. The bottom was starting to fall out of the video game market, and it was just an *unplayable* game, from what I've been told. It was not "user friendly," to say the least.

ANDY: *I've never been able to get through it.*

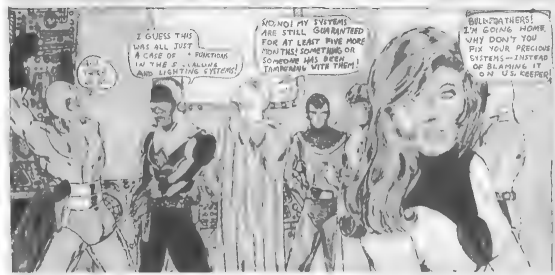
TO BE WILLED (NIGHTHAWK)
OKAY, WILLARD, I'LL TAKE CARE OF LAST MONTH'S RENT, BUT IF I DON'T GET THIS MONTH'S IN
GENERAL ALARM GOING OUT TO THE MEMBE
...TO RODNEY WINSTON (EAGLE)...
OH, BLAST! WITH ALL THESE MEETINGS, I'LL NEVER GET A DEGREE IN
...TO CAROLE LEE SMITH (POWER-GIRL)...
HIGHER CAN SUBS AT THE HQ DURATIONS TIMES)
...TO CAPT. TOM MONROE (ELECTRON
...AND TO LT. CHARLES AYALA (ASTRON)
...TO DR. JIM (DAL
AWGREAT! A CHANC FOR ACTION AT
AND LATER THEY ALL GOT TOGETHER AT THEIR MEETING PLACE...!

my wedding; I've been over at his house."

GEORGE: As Atari was starting to go under, it was at the point where they have this promised four-part contest — and they only have two done. The third comic was done; I don't even know if the third game was done. The fourth comic was *never* done. I have no idea how Atari resolved that entire incident. But the fourth and final part of the SWORDQUEST series was never drawn. Thus I'm sure the game was never made. So I haven't the faintest idea where they went with that. I was very happy with it as far as the drawing, because it was such a change of pace for me at the time, doing non-superhero stuff — doing a fantasy sword-and-sorcery type story where I got to do some wild visuals. It was

ALRIGHT, NOW WHICH ONE OF YOU CALLED FOR THIS BLASTED MEETING? I'VE GOT A BUSY
DON'T LOOK AT ME— I AIN'T EVEN A LAZY LOOKER, EITHER! WELL, KEEPER, DID YOU FIX THIS UP— YOU'RE THE ONE WHO USUALLY DOES!
I'M AFRAID I'M NOT GUILTY THIS TIME, NIGHTHAWK— I'M JUST AS CONFUSED AS ALL OF YOU ARE

HE— HE TURNED OUT THE LIGHT!
THIS MUST BE
WHAT WAS THAT? WHO SAID THAT?
OUCH! I STUBBED MY TOE!
COMRADS, HELP! SOMEONE'S GOT
WHAT CAUSED ALL THIS, ANYWAY?
I DON'T KNOW! I'M LUCKY I'M IN THE DARK
U! WHO HAD THE GALL TO MAKE A FOUL LIKE THAT? I'LL KILL HIM— IF I CAN EVER FIND HIM, THAT IS!
WILL EVERYO SETTLE DOWN! I'M GETTIN' OUT MY FLASHLIGHT!
SAY SO BEFORE, NIGHTHAWK?


I GUESS THIS WAS ALL JUST A CASE OF FUNCTIONS IN THE P-VALVE AND LIGHTING SYSTEMS!
SO, NO! MY SYSTEMS ARE STILL GUARANTEED FOR AT LEAST FIVE MORE MONTHS! SOMETHING OR SOMEONE HAS BEEN TAMPERING WITH THEM!
BULLSTATHERS! I'M GOING HOME! WHY DON'T YOU FIX YOUR PRECIOUS SYSTEMS— INSTEAD OF BLAMING IT ON US, KEEPER!

© 1987 Perez

"I was happy doing a fantasy sword-and-

supposed to be reprinted by DC in a deluxe album edition, but the fourth one was never drawn; I seriously doubt that they're ever going to do it, unless I'm approached to finish it or **Dick Giordano** finds someone else to pencil the fourth chapter and then prints it as an album. Because it was drawn for such a small size, if they want to publish it in a larger format, some artwork would actually have to be touched up, since some of the lines were simplified in order to be reduced as small as it was.

ANDY: *In those comics, you put clues in...*

GEORGE: I didn't.

ANDY: *You didn't?*

GEORGE: No, the clues were all put in

I AM NOT BLAMING ANY OF YOU, MISS SMITH.
THE MANY FACES OF THE STRANGER
THE POLICE SIGNAL
I'LL HAVE TO SETTLE WITH YOU PETTY THUGS FOR MY DAY'S WORTH
BUT, WAIT TILL I GET MY HANDS ON THE GUY WHO GAVE US THIS JOB!

sorcery story; I got to do some wild visuals."

by **Dick Giordano.** I haven't the faintest idea where any of the clues where. In the inking process, Dick was responsible for putting the clues in. I had neither any idea nor any interest in where the clues went.

ANDY: *Interesting. You also did three T-shirts for them, didn't you?*

GEORGE: I've had only seen two, but I remember designing a third. Or did I design a third? I did three covers . . . did I do a third T-shirt?

ANDY: *Yep.*

GEORGE: Oh, yeah . . . I was very happy with them, particularly the first two; the third one was a rush job. The first one, in particular — "Earth World" — I was really happy with that T-shirt. I was very happy with the transfer. Also, I was do-

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"I enjoy drawing very full-figured women."

ing full color work on something — that was unusual for me, and they were really pleased with it.

ANDY: *What happened with the third T-shirt?*

GEORGE: The third T-shirt was done very quickly. I myself never received one... I received a call from Dick Giordano saying they needed this plus the cover as quickly as possible, and I whipped out the T-shirt for issue three, "Waterworld," using markers and water colors as quickly as possible.

ANDY: *So you didn't see that until the 1984 San Diego Comicon?*

GEORGE: That's right, when *you* were wearing the T-shirt was the first time I saw it. I had totally forgotten about it!

ANDY: *Since you've never really extensively worked for an independent publisher before, you don't own much of your artwork. How does that make you feel, as far as owning reprint rights and so forth?*

GEORGE: Well, I do get reprint royalties, and I do get a creator's royalty. I don't own the characters outright but, again, I'm also not the one who's using a publicity machine or an agent in order to try to sell my characters to the public. This way, I draw the project and, if it succeeds, I earn a good deal of cash for it. If it doesn't succeed I've still been paid for it. DC so far has treated me well. I have an advantage that, as deals are made, I benefit from them; if other people get a good deal, they have to give it to me as well, if it's for the same type of deal. If I could think of something of my own that I could market and retain full creator's rights and copyright, I would — but I haven't gotten what I'd consider a real gem of an idea I could sell and earn the big bucks on. At this point that has not hit me. Other people, who have created their own, of course have every right to get as much as they want for it. In my case, most of the stuff I've done has been a rehash of other things, or using it based on a prior business policy. I can work with that. But if deals are changed automatically for the same type of thing, I have a "favored nations" type of clause in my contract; I cannot be screwed because of previous policy. Eventually, I'd love to create my own; I just can't think of anything right now that I think is all that commercial that hasn't been done to death already.

ANDY: *How do you create the visual look of your characters? Your designs are always really distinctive. You can spot a Perez costume at thirty paces.*

GEORGE: It's instinctive, I can't break it down into mechanics. I think if I start breaking it down and succeed then I'll be looking at my own mechanicalism, and I really don't want to do that. There should be a certain sense of spontaneity in design. Many a time if I design a page, as I'm drawing it, the page changes little by little because I don't want to stick to the total forced code that I've placed upon myself. So I start altering things here or there, even as I'm talking now, the picture I'm drawing right now has been altered a little bit as I've decided, "No, I don't want to do it this way, I want it *this* way." There's almost no resemblance except to the central figures from the way I had intended to start it.

ANDY: *Your women are almost all exceptionally well developed as well. "Zoftig" is a word you used to describe them.*

GEORGE: Many moons back, I remember it.

ANDY: *For those in the audience who don't know what "zoftig" means, why don't you tell them?*

GEORGE: "Zoftig" means very full-figured, bosomy... in the days when I used them, I had a tendency to make the women look a little *too* full, in the hips, in the thighs. I've since slimmed them down a good deal, emphasizing the larger legs only on the characters that are supposed to be quite muscular. The TITANS themselves, all the women's legs tend to be more slender, emphasizing the fact that they were teenagers. But I enjoy drawing very full-figured women. I come from a Latin background; it's very much something from heredity, preferring a very full-figured woman. And every person tends to draw their own ideal, if the character is supposed to be an ideal. Of course, being in comics, we're drawing ideals in all ways. So the men end up having very strong, muscular builds. I'm big and brawny myself since I lost weight. I have the characters physically fit, since that's my goal as well. We're drawing in ideals... every single artist who works in this business is at least trying to make an attempt to do attractive women.

ANDY: *How do you begin a story, George? Do you go through rough layouts first, or do you start right into the graphics?*

GEORGE: Depends on what story it is. For the TEEN TITANS, since the plot has already been discussed, I go right into drawing it. The page design is usually in

From the unpublished JLA/AVENGERS book, including the She-Hulk, a *zoftig* woman.

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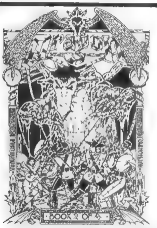

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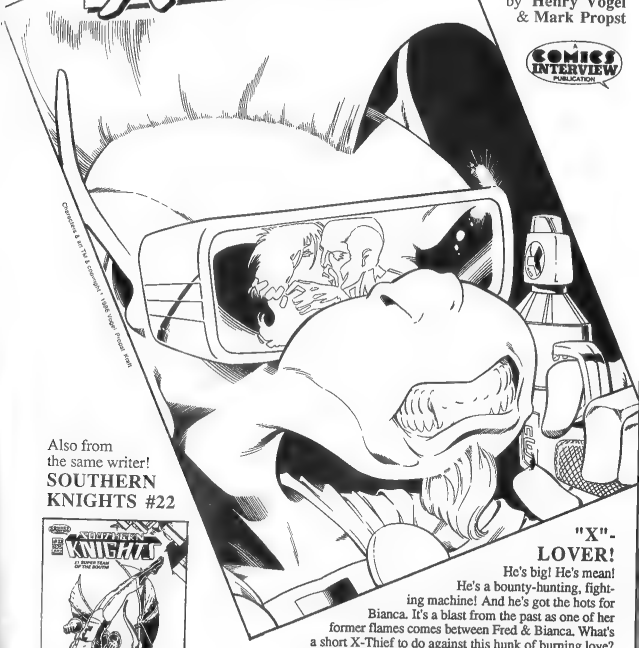

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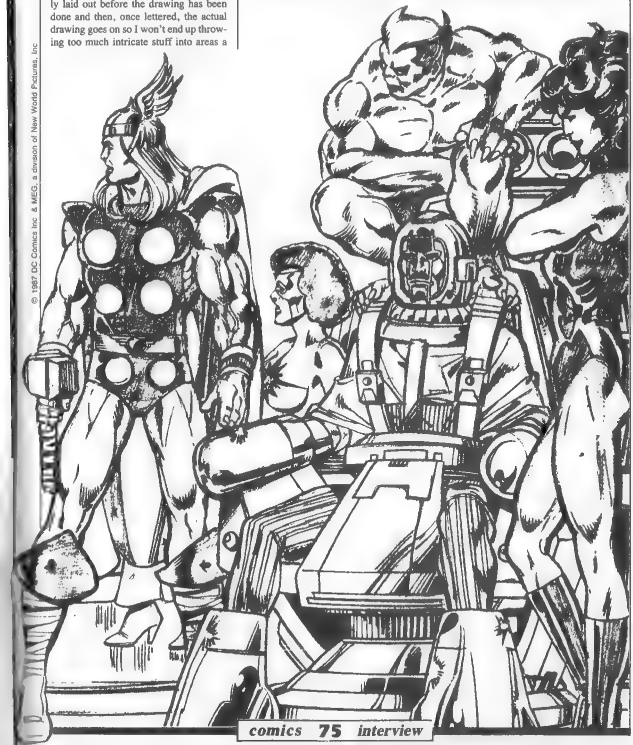
I come from a Latin background . . ."

my head, so I don't really have to concern myself with having to design a page; I seldom ever do that. In the case of WONDER WOMAN, where the book is being plotted as we go along, I lay out the book first so notes can be written down for the plot, so that it can go to the scripter and the letterer. So the *book* has been totally laid out before the drawing has been done and then, once lettered, the actual drawing goes on so I won't end up throwing too much intricate stuff into areas a word balloon is going to cover. But for the most part I tend to work very, very instinctively. I draw a page straight on, I try not to spend time designing the page On some occasions, like CRISIS, I *will* spend a little more time designing a page -- since there's so many characters involved, I have to make design very important or else it gets confusing. And also very mundane. I can easily draw the same panel layout over and over again, but I get bored, so it takes a lot of work then to make the pages interesting.

ANDY: *How do you approach storytelling, then?*

GEORGE: Storytelling? Basically, in-



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"I was a great admirer of Hitchcock."

stinct. If I know what I want to emphasize, I know how to set it up. I treat my mind like a silent movie camera. I want to show, in as smooth a movement as I can, a sequence of events either leading up to a climax, building down from a climax, or trying to keep interest at a steady level. And using the typical tricks like "large panel for climax," "smaller panel for building," "sequential panel for time movement"... using those particular tricks of the trade, I create a story. Again, it's not something that I break down all that consciously. I know what I'm doing when I'm doing it. The only thing that I sometimes stop and consciously do in order to make the thing interesting, is make sure that I have not taken the easy way out all of the time by doing the same camera angles — I need to make the page interesting and to challenge myself so I don't go into a standard rut. The one advantage you have in doing comics is that you don't have to wait until everyone moves the camera so you can get a different angle. Your mind quickly moves to whatever angle you want — your mind's eye. And I can shoot everything in the same scene from twelve different angles if I want to. I have gone back after thinking a page through. Sometimes I've already laid out the page and, as I'm starting to finish the thing, I decide, "Nooooo, I'm going to alter it." A page of WONDER WOMAN was already lettered; a panel was already lettered; and I decided a visual I had used in a prior panel made the second panel too dull, so I altered the entire look of the panel. The word balloon's still in the same place, but I totally altered the angle of the panel. And that's the type of thing you do in order to keep it exciting.

ANDY: *Do you feel you've lost any storytelling by using, like, twenty panels per page with eighty-seven characters per panel, and so forth?*

GEORGE: Sometimes I do. Unfortunately, most of the time it's because I don't have much choice, trying to fit all I want into a small amount of pages. CRISIS is a big problem, particularly towards issue #12. A gigantic story with an incredible amount of characters and really not all that much space to do it in. There are times where it is a problem and other times when I accept it as part of my style. I do tend to break every scene down into even *more* components. Instead of showing a man shot — a person is being gunned down as a car is moving — I would break down the action to the person being shot and the car moving, breaking down all the elements of a particular sequence. That's basically, again, my style. It's not a style that works for everyone. Many times it doesn't even work for me...

ANDY: *(Laughter.)*

GEORGE: ...but it's definitely the style I like. I was a great admirer of **Alfred Hitchcock**, of George Stevens, of many other directors who have a tendency of doing multiple takes of a particular sequence and cutting them all together to keep your eye moving very, very quickly, feeding a lot of information in rapid succession instead of letting you linger on one particular scene for any length of time.

ANDY: *What do you consider to be lacking in your art? What would you like to improve on?*

GEORGE: A certain *ease* with the actual drawing itself. In spite of the fact I've been drawing a lot, there are some times I have trouble drawing women's faces as pretty as I would like them. Understanding the way the folds in clothing work so instinctively that I don't have to research it. You *do* need some kind of a reference to reality, and any time I look at other artists' work I notice certain things that I wish I

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"I've got a reputation for being insane."

had control of. I wish I had control of a brush like **Joe Sinnott — Brian Bolland.** I can't believe actually does all of that stuff with a brush! — or **Dick Giordano.** I'm strictly a pen man. I wish I could control a brush, because there's a certain texture you can get with a brush you can't get with a pen unless you really work harder for it — that's one thing I *definitely* wish I could do. Not having ever had art training, I regret that I never did learn the fundamentals of painting and have no real patience to go through an actual learning session. I basically do the best I can with what I have, and hope I get better. I definitely wish I had some formal training when I was young and going through education anyway, to make some of the stuff as easy as possible. Beyond that, just hoping that I will be better on my next assignment than I am on the last. There's always a bit of insecurity that I have — and I'm sure other

artists have — of seeing another artist do something so well that automatically you want to be able to do that. "Why can't *I* do that?" It inspires me to get better. I mean, when I did my first issue of CRISIS, it was after seeing **Jose Garcia Lopez's** pencils on his first TITANS story. It forced me to be better, because I admired what he did on it. His very natural way of drawing faces and the human body, you know, kind of forced me not to draw stock positions all the time. Looking at **Brian Bolland's** sense of detail and texture has always gotten me — anytime I feel like I'm going to simplify my work, I see someone who's done some beautiful texture work and I feel, "Well... I'm going to start texturing up my work a little more, "and so I complicate my artwork again. But, like, that's the way it is.

ANDY: *Okay. Now, you've mentioned you use a pen to ink with, and I've read before that's because you're double-*

jointed... What point do you use to ink with?

GEORGE: I use a Hunt 100 quill, it's got a very flexible point. I buy them by the dozen, and I use that almost exclusively. I might use a very hard — I forget what they call it — a very tiny point, sometimes, if I'm drawing very tiny detail on solid figures as opposed to soft figures, in order to keep the lines dead and flat so it doesn't texture up. But, for the most part, I use a Hunt 100 — all my figure work is done with a Hunt 100, all of my texture work is with the Hunt 100. I just found it last year and I've really enjoyed it. It works nicely for drawing the contours and really, really great for drawing hair. And in the case of drawing the WONDER WOMAN series...

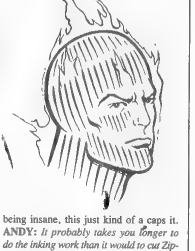
ANDY: *There's a lot of hair!*

GEORGE: There's all these women and all the particularly different hairstyles — people with curly hair, straight hair, different types of curly hair, black hair, blonde hair. Some of the people I admire drawing hair, I've mentioned **Alphonse Mucha,** but I love the way **Dick Giordano** does hair, he does it with a brush.

Tony DeZuniga, I've always admired the way he does hair. This gets me as close to that style as I probably could want, limited to my own ability.

ANDY: *Well, you've recently started a new style of inking, too, of — I don't know exactly how to describe it, but — a lot of cross-hatching and parallel lines that weren't there before CRISIS.*

GEORGE: Oh yeah! Well, again, I've been watching others — again giving a tip of the hat to **Brian Bolland** — plus also getting a lot into seeing illustration work and really getting hooked on it. Wanting to develop a more illustrative style so it isn't just plain, simple clean comic book "cartooning." It's wanting to do a little bit of growing there, within the limits of my own style. And being too lazy to constantly cut Zip-A-Tone... *(Laughter.)* I'll do it all by hand. I've got a reputation for



being insane, this just kind of a caps it.

ANDY: *It probably takes you longer to do the inking work than it would to cut Zip-A-Tone, doesn't it?*

GEORGE: Not necessarily. There're certain things I like to do with the texture of things. I like to end up redrawing on top of a texture; drawing on top of Zip-A-Tone is drawing on top of plastic, and that's a real pain in the butt. Also, I don't know — it must be upbringing or something — there's a great feeling of knowing that every line I put down there is mine, that I resort to as little...

ANDY: *Faking it?*

GEORGE: ...as little mechanics as possible. The only times I figure that Zip-A-Tone really works is for time considerations. If you have to produce a book on time, of course, you better get it out as fast as possible, and the mechanics work out great. Or if it's supposed to be a

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"I was bothered by Rubinstein's comment."

shading zip, as precise as possible so that there's no possible way a human eye... I definitely cannot draw a shading as evenly as a screen can do it. Sometimes, like on a TITAN story I did in pencil, if I draw it in gray, then they mechanically screen it themselves; *they* have done the mechanics and I've still done the amount of work that I felt good about.

ANDY: *Joe Rubinstein once referred to your art as very "masturbatory." How do you take a comment like that?*

GEORGE: Well, until I finally figured out what he *meant* by it, I was a little bothered by it. But he's right. I get more pleasure out of my artwork — particularly the way it looks in the original form — than is probably wise in my business, you know. Because of reproduction and because of reduction — with the exception of anyone who sees the original artwork or who ends up owning it — no one will ever see all the work that has been put into the page. So it is almost like drawing it to please myself. And after a little bit of time thinking, "Is that right?" I thought, "Hell, sure it is," because if I don't enjoy what I do then what the hell is the good of doing it? After initially wondering what he meant, and then understanding the full impact of that, I thought, "Yeah, he's right," and I'm happy for that. The day it doesn't give me pleasure is the day it won't give anyone else pleasure.

ANDY: *Okay! You tend to overcome artistic obstacles people set in your way. Marv once told you not to do downshots, but now you're the most well-known artist for doing these fabulous cityscapes.*

GEORGE: I don't know if I'm the most well known...

ANDY: *Yes, you are! (Laughter.)*

GEORGE: Well again, the one thing about not having art training is you end up with a great disadvantage. Fortunately, one thing that's great about being in the comics business is that all these people who have been there longer will tell you things you're doing wrong. Once you get your ego in check, which is what I had to do, you realize that you're getting all this free art training in the business and getting paid for it, and if you want to stay in the business you've got to show these people that they're wrong. There was a lot of stuff there I mentioned earlier how heavy the women were. There are certain things one learns. The downshots and all, once I got down to exactly what my vanishing point was, it became rather instinctive — it isn't all that hard once you put your mind to it. But if you're going to be lazy, which is what I was — lazy and untrained — you're bound to produce inferior work and it shows.

Unprinted Aquaman sketch from 1979, given to Andy Mangels.

ANDY: *Speaking of cityscapes, do you use photo references, or does Perez City come from your head?*

GEORGE: Well, it varies. If it's a typical superhero story, definitely just from the head — or else I'm actually using a reference to a city that has absolutely no streets in it! *(Laughter.)* If it's a real scene and I want to emphasize the reality of it, then I *will* use reference.

ANDY: *What do you mean by "no streets?"*

GEORGE: Well, if you look down on most **Perez** cityscapes, you see tall buildings, but they're all jammed right into each other — there couldn't possibly be any streets there! But if I'm doing a more realistic shot, then I would take the time to make the streets there, and you could see the cars, whatever. And more than likely I would use reference or at least look at photographs just to get the essence of what the street design is and then work from there.

ANDY: *You work in a very strange method at home; explain to me, please, why do you draw lying down on the couch with your board over your head?*

"If I want to keep going on in this

GEORGE: I do that very seldom now. I used to do that, basically, because hunching over a drawing board one gets very tired and it's hard on the back after awhile. So I would go to the couch, that way I could lay back and hold the drawing board . . . obviously, that's only doing pencilling. I could never ink that way. *(Laughter.)* But I don't do that as much now, mostly because it starts to wear out the couch, and it was easier when I didn't use reference, when I was taking all the shortcuts. But now if I want to do something right, it requires a little more discipline, so I tend to get to the drawing board 'cause there I can have the references, the ruler, the compasses — anything I may actually need — right at hand as opposed to having to put something on the floor, something on the couch, and having to bend all over the place just to reach for something.

ANDY: *You've mentioned that you really love art nouveau, especially the work of Alphonse Mucha. Do you ever see yourself doing a comic in art nouveau style, totally?*

GEORGE: I don't know if it translates. Because *art nouveau* is basically all poster art, I don't know how well that would translate. You'd have to show action without it being distracting. I think the style was done so much to be pretty, to emphasize the beauty of the picture, that I think storytelling might suffer if everything that you drew — every page, every panel — was a poster, so that you're looking at how pretty it is and lose sight of what the story was supposed to be.

ANDY: *Well, you could do a story like TITANS #38 or TITANS #50 in that manner . . .*

GEORGE: Again, since mood changes, there are certain things that nice posters effect works for, and that's to be pretty. But when you have to show impact, like of a burning building — the emotional turmoil of a character in the case of TITANS #38 — you have to adjust the style to work for that scene. You don't use the same thing every time. Art nouveau tends to be — particularly the **Mucha** style — tends to be a very pretty style and when you really want a gritty reality you can't go for that effect.

ANDY: *Here's a really off the wall question, totally out of sequence. What kind of music do you like?*

GEORGE: The old tunes. I like rock, heavy metal to some degree — it depends on what I'm working on — the classics, novelty records, almost anything that the radio has on, and show tunes I like a lot. It's a very wide range; almost anything that somebody will have on I will listen to, including country western.

ANDY: *What do you work on when you listen to heavy metal?*

GEORGE: Something that requires a character to be intense — it's an intense type of music. Classical music or easy listening music if the character is a little softer, only because it keeps you in the mood for it. And then sometimes I might use heavier rock music if I'm getting a little tired and I need something to keep me awake. There's many reasons to have different types of music in there.

ANDY: *Who do you really enjoy working with, both writers and inkers?*

GEORGE: I've always enjoyed working with Marv and will enjoy working with Marv again. As far as inkers are concerned, considering the hell I put them through . . . *(Laughter.)* I enjoy working with Terry, and **Jerry Ordway** . . .

ANDY: *Terry Austin?*

GEORGE: Yes, **Terry Austin**, and **Joe Sinnott**, who is also a prince of a man, and a number of others I'm sure, and a number of other writers and inkers . . . I can't switch my gears to remember names, particularly because I'm drawing at the same time.

ANDY: *If I can be so bold, who don't you enjoy working with?*

GEORGE: No, you cannot be so bold. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Okay . . .*

GEORGE: That's a personal preference, and doesn't bear being put into print.

ANDY: *Do you like working with a Marvel style script, or a full script?*

GEORGE: I definitely prefer a script that I have a lot of leeway with. There are very, very rare exceptions. **Alan Moore** always does full script; his writing is so intense that I would want him to work in the most comfortable way possible and I would work with that. I have worked with full scripts before; it's a discipline, wherein you're definitely trying to capture the writer's vision and still put as much of yourself as you can. You're bound by the confines of what the characters are saying, since the dialog has to remain the same. You may change the panel layout, you may change the exact scene, but you have to keep the dialog intact. And that's a good discipline. It sometimes teaches you the real fundamentals of storytelling. But on the whole I do prefer having a lot of input into the story itself.

ANDY: *Is there anybody new on the market who you think is going to be the next Perez or Byrne?*

GEORGE: Well, whether they want to be **Perez** or **Byrne** is up to them . . .

ANDY: *I mean that big a name.*

GEORGE: There's a new guy, I believe his name is **Kevin Maguire**, who does the JUSTICE LEAGUE and I think is very, very good. I'm trying to think offhand of other people I've seen . . **Steve Lightle** is promising . . **David Mazzuchelli**, who I think is already starting to receive a lot of excited praise . . . **Arthur Adams**, and **Steve Rude** (well, Steve, I don't know if he's a *newcomer* anymore, these days) . . . **Stan Woch** . . . There are a lot of people out there. That's one thing — if I want to keep going in this business, I can't rest on my laurels.

"Art nouveau — particularly Mucha — tends to be very pretty."

business, I can't rest on my laurels."

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Left: Unpublished Justice League sketch from 1971. Right: Tryout sample for JUSTICE LEAGUE, from 1976 when George was working with Rich Buckler.

ANDY: *What is your advice to aspiring artists?*

GEORGE: Never listen to old aspiring artists, basically. Don't stick to comics. In learning, never be afraid to use reference — use other people as influences, as long as it doesn't become your sole reason for being. Don't be another **George Perez**, don't be another **John Byrne**, don't be another **Jack Kirby**, don't be another anyone else. You can *learn* from them, but don't try just to *be* them. No matter how much you like their work, there still has to be a certain amount of style for yourself. And, basically, let your *pride* go. The one thing that every artist has to face, I can't think of a single artist who hasn't, is you have to let go of your pride. 'Cause the first thing that you're gonna have to accept is criticism. And it's par for the course. If these people are paying you for your work, they have a right to criticize you, because they're going to be paying money. Whatever way you want to learn works for you, do it. But the one emphasis is *learn*. Don't be afraid to take advice and be smart enough to know when the advice works for you and don't criticize it; don't criticize the critics because they don't like your work.

ANDY: *Anything more?*

GEORGE: Also if you want to have your artwork criticized, get it criticized by someone you respect. If you don't like it, again, keep your pride in check and find out if that person is having an off day or if their criticisms are valid. Get more than one critique, get a second opinion of your work.

ANDY: *What comics do you read, George? You're obviously very busy, but I know you take a break to read some comics . . .*

GEORGE: No, the only one I read right now is THE WATCHMEN. It's the only one. I enjoy it a lot, and it's different enough that it gives me something interesting to go through. I just picked up the last DARK KNIGHT, I'll be reading that. Again, because of my schedule, my own preferences, I tend *not* to read comics at all, because I want to have my social life be something other than comics. This is my job — I enjoy it immensely — but once I'm away from the drawing board, I really would like to get away from comics.

ANDY: *Do you feel that the superhero has a stranglehold on the market?*

GEORGE: Oh, sure! Of course, they have . . . I don't begrudge the success of the heroes. I love to draw the superheroes. But I'd like to be able to say that you can go into the business and make a living drawing a Western, or a love comic, or a comedy, or something totally different from the normal scheme of things. That the fans and the buying public would support it. I regret that this is *not* the case, and it's very unfair to a lot of people whose styles would probably be better suited to that type of work. I give credit to those companies — both major and independent — who give it a game try. It is not easy. You have to break even or make some kind of profit — and those who don't worry about profit, more power to them. But it's like . . . I wish there *were* more. I enjoy drawing superheroes, but I *love* to do other things, if given a chance. If nothing else, I think I would grow more as an artist if I did. At this point, it doesn't look all that likely that the superheroes are

"Maybe I, too, have become a little jaded

going to be usurped anytime soon. I'm glad when there are books, even as off the wall as ANGEL LOVE or...

ANDY: *'MAZING MAN?*

GEORGE: Well, 'MAZING MAN takes its roots from the superhero comics. But ANGEL LOVE, NATHANIEL DUSK, or JOURNEY — books like that, which have, with the exception of format, very little to do with comics as known today — those I enjoy more. Even though WATCHMEN is a superhero book, it's trying for a totally different direction, like 'MAZING MAN. I would love to see more of those, and it could be psychologically the reason I enjoy WATCHMEN as much as I do — because it doesn't come off like a superhero comic. Maybe I, too, have become a little jaded... I think it's almost impossible not to be jaded if you are force fed the same thing over and over and over again. I would like to see other artists be able to do other things.

Again, I do enjoy doing superheroes; that'll probably be the main thing for me. But to be *able* to do other things — or for other artists to able to say, "this is what I prefer to do, other than superheros," and be able to make it financially feasible for themselves — I think would be for the good of the industry.

ANDY: *What do you see as the future for comics with all the independents — there are a lot of diverse things around now...*

GEORGE: For my own sake and the sake of everyone in the business, I hope that it does produce a more varied, lucrative field for everyone involved. But I'm not a psychic and I'm not good at predicting the fickle tastes of fandom, or the general readership. I've stated what I *hope* it would be, but as to what I think the future actually *will* be, Lord knows... I just hope I'm still working at it *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Speaking of the superhero, what is your personal concept of a hero?*

GEORGE: To me, a hero is someone who will face adversity consciously, for the sake of someone else. Heroes will face death knowing full well the immediacy of their own danger and still be willing to stand for their convictions. To me, a man facing cancer or facing an operation, wherein maybe if he were doing to die it would benefit someone else, has far greater immediacy than the lesser likelihood of a man saying, "I'm going to save another planet so it doesn't crash into ours." 'Cause I cannot see the other one, and I can identify with a man facing an immediate danger to his own health for the sake of someone else. A woman facing — this is typical — the regular hardships of everyday life for her family, and can at least go through another day, to me that's true heroism and there's a lot more of that in the real world than what comes out as our sometimes mock-heroism in comics. I mean, we're bigger than life, but life has a lot of heroes of its own...

ANDY: *Yet you are a fan of THE WATCHMEN, and none of them are particularly what one would call heroic?*

GEORGE: I like good drama, too. *(Laughter.)* I didn't say I like WATCHMEN because I like it as a superhero book; I like it because it's a good story. I mean, like, I've read a lot of stories where the characters are not exactly the most pleasant people, or the realities that they are presenting are not pleasant. I enjoy WATCHMEN because I consider it a very, very well written story.

ANDY: *Rereading my pile of Perez things in anticipation of this interview, I came across a very peculiar comment. You said that if you could be any animal in the world, you would choose to be an octopus. Why is that?*

GEORGE: To be able to draw many pages at one time. *(Laughter.)* In hindsight, things change as time goes by. If I were to be any animal, I don't know if I would choose an octopus now, because at that point I enjoyed drawing — I still do — but I never tired of it. Now, I like the idea of being able to relax after awhile. Of drawing, and then being able to sit back and lie down and *not* draw for awhile.

ANDY: *So what kind of animal would you be now?*

GEORGE: If I were to be any animal, now, I'd probably want to be a horse, and have my *wife* on my back. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *We won't go into that... (Laughter.) Let's see, your friendship with Valentino — boy, are we skipping around subjects here — your friendship with Valentino lead to several guest appearances in nORMALMAN. In one issue the Perez Rubble Company was around; you created the character Paste Pasta Pete; you pencilled a back cover of Nasty Girl; and, finally, you and Marv were pulled in Dark Fluffy's Black Hole and up through the ANNUAL. How'd all this come about?*

GEORGE: Well, the first time I had the Perez Rubble thing was before I even met Valentino. When I did meet him, I expressed how much I enjoyed his nORMALMAN, which somebody had turned me on to; I had no access to it where I was, and somebody introduced me, which I thanked them for. But I expressed how much I enjoyed **Valentino**'s work, which seemed to both surprise and please him... and we started talking and I told him I would definitely like to do something like the back cover of Nasty Girl, which is how that came about, and basically it was just an admiration for each other's work. I did the back cover for him because I liked his work, and he put me in because he admired the stuff Marv and I were doing. It was a nice little friendly thing he did, and I always appreciated that.

ANDY: *Even though you got sucked into Dark Fluffy's Black Hole? (Laughter.)*

GEORGE: Hey, you know, I got kidnapped in my own TITANS "Tale of Tomfoolery"; believe me, it's fun — it's comics, there's a certain fun that still exists.

ANDY: *Okay, skipping again, what do you think of the trend for awhile of "Everybody's Leaving Marvel?"*

GEORGE: What do I think of it?

ANDY: *Yeah, with John Byrne and Dave Mazzuchelli and Frank Miller and...*

GEORGE: Well, in the case of **Byrne**, I know that John wanted to do SUPERMAN for the longest time, and finally things seemed to work out that way. I can't speak for **David Mazzuchelli**, nor can I really speak for anyone else. But I think obviously if you're losing a lot of people, then maybe you should reassess your company's policies if you want to keep those people. And if you're gaining all these people, you ought to hope you're doing something right as a company because you're starting to gain a lot of people who are interested in working for you. For DC, I think that's worked really great, because the majority of people who've left Marvel have come to DC, as opposed to going independent. In the case of Marvel, only time will tell. Everyone moaned when **John Byrne** left the X-MEN, but the book has survived and flourished since his departure; DAREDEVIL sales held up after **Miller** left, and the AVENGERS held up after I left, so only time will tell. There's always some new star on the horizon — whether he'll go to Marvel or DC, it'll benefit either one. I myself do question the policies of a company that loses *that* many people, though — in some cases, they may even take pay cuts in order to leave — so I question the editorial policies that will allow that many really talented people to be leaving. I hope for the sake of the company — only because I believe competition is valuable, in *any* industry — that it's not something that's going to be totally destructive to either one of the companies, particularly the one that keeps losing people.

ANDY: *Well, that segues into something we've talked about before, and you've*

. . . I think it's almost impossible not to."

mentioned in previous interviews. Tell us briefly about the JLA / AVENGERS controversy. . .

GEORGE: Considering this was covered in a previous interview, why don't I just say "please see issue #6 of COMICS INTERVIEW." *(Laughter.)* Basically, that's a subject that's been long bandied back and forth, and I think I've had enough with that one.

ANDY: *Well, you once said that, because of that, you'd never work for Marvel as long as Jim Shooter was there —*

GEORGE: That was one of the editorial things he had done that I would not agree with — I definitely would not work for the company under his editorship, no. I had absolutely no desire to, and I've had no reason to regret my decision.

ANDY: *Do you think you might do something for Marvel in the future?*

GEORGE: Oh, I never had anything against Marvel per se. Sure. Definitely. In my case, I wouldn't work for the company under Jim, or anyone who's going to be doing the same thing as Jim. This is not against Jim as a person, but against his policies. So if somebody comes in and is doing the same exact thing, that'll still keep me away. But before the editorship became so firmly entrenched as the Shooter Regime, I definitely would not have had any trouble working with them. And if it went back to something I felt I could deal with, then of course. I love the characters there, I'd have absolutely no problem with that.

ANDY: *How did you feel about Marvel reprinting such a huge volume of your work in the revised MARVEL UNIVERSE HANDBOOK? Did they pay you for that?*

GEORGE: Yes. I just received a paycheck, in fact. At first I complained because I didn't get any, but then I found out that they didn't have my address. Under my old contract, they have a right to reprint anything of mine that they had. The fact that they pay me a reprint fee is part of the agreement, and they have. On a purely ethical basis, I don't like it; that's not to say that what they're doing is wrong, but it makes it seem like I'm still doing work for them. Some of the stuff is vague enough so that they just say I've done the artwork, and as far as anyone is concerned, it's *new* artwork by George

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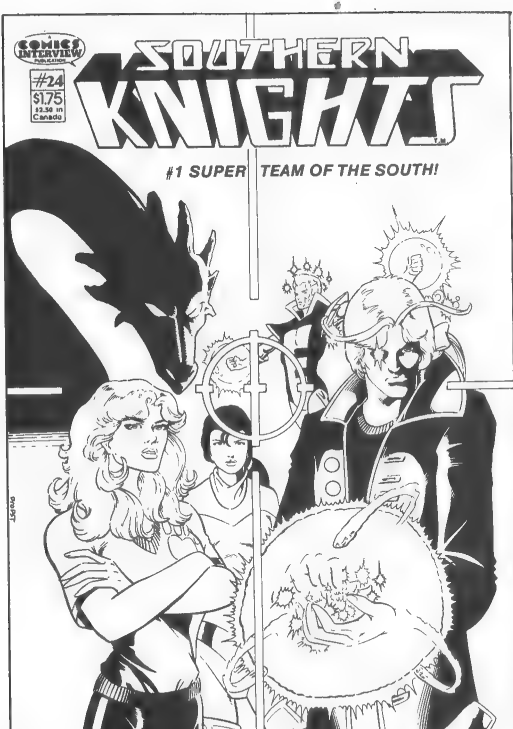

SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #24 **Zephyr Flint, head of VIPER, suddenly finds himself at the wrong end of an assassin's rifle. Knowing no one else he can turn to for protection, Flint goes to his enemies, the Southern Knights! But Flint isn't the only one from the Knights' past to pop up! Synergy, the assassins Carl & Larry, and Serpent form the strangest team in comics history — all in SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #24!**

by Henry Vogel

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"I got back my art stolen from DC. All."

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Perez, when the artwork was done many, many years before. I would never have done that artwork now.

ANDY: *Is that in the case of Sons of the Tiger?*

GEORGE: You know, I had totally forgotten about those things! When I was first shown them, I thought I didn't draw that! Those were character design sketches I had done all the way back when I was doing the series, in 1974-1975. They *are* my work... but the fact that it's definitely not *new* Perez work and nobody knows that to me seems a little deceptive.

ANDY: *Now they'll know.*

GEORGE: Well, let's face it, the circulation of COMICS INTERVIEW is nothing like the circulation of a standard Marvel comic. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Whatever happened with the pages of your original art stolen from DC?*

GEORGE: Oh, they were found. We got 'em back; I got 'em back. All of them.

ANDY: *On another subject then, what's your working relationship with Deluxe Comics? You're under exclusive contract with DC, yet you were doing "The Raven" for Deluxe.*

GEORGE: Well, at this point, I have not heard from them in months — neither have most of the people I've worked with, including **Dann Thomas**.

ANDY: *So are you going to do concluding chapters to "Raven"?*

GEORGE: As far as I can see, I don't think so. I think they've taken a hell of a long time producing, and while Lodestone seems to be printing things, I haven't seen a single thing with the Deluxe banner lately. I may be wrong, but I believe T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS was the only thing Deluxe was printing. They've advertised, and I've seen on many lists that issue #7, issue #8, or whatever, is supposed to be out, but the last one was issue #4 and nothing has come in of the others. I know that there's a full **Jerry Ordway** story that was drawn. I've seen it — it was pencilled, it was inked — but I haven't seen anything beyond that. I know that **Dann Thomas**, who writes the "The Raven" hasn't done anything; of course, she couldn't write anything I haven't drawn... and she has not received word one; no one has received word. And at this point, it's not worth my time or my trouble to go around trying to find out. It pays very well, but with all the stuff that went down, it isn't worth the aggravation.

ANDY: *In their last letter column, which was in T.H.U.N.D.E.R AGENTS #4, a RAVEN graphic novel which would reprint all your stuff and have a new cover by you.*

JLA/AVENGERS art. Shooter's refusal to accept the project "broke my heart. I lived for waking up to get started on those pages." So said George back in COMICS INTERVIEW #6.

Do you know anything about this?

GEORGE: Oh, sure. We discussed that. One thing I didn't particularly care for is that they make it sound like it's my first graphic novel... well, technically, it's not a graphic novel, it is more like an album collection, you know. They would have wanted a couple of pages drawn totally new for it. The thing that bothers me is for it to be advertised as my first graphic novel, as if it were an original. Which it isn't.

ANDY: *I understand they tampered with your art on the covers of T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS #3 and #4?*

GEORGE: Yeah. I'm not exactly sure on #4. I can't prove it because I don't have a copy of my original cover, but that face on Phantom Lady doesn't look like, or I feel doesn't look like...

ANDY: *Iron Maiden.*

GEORGE: Oh, yeah, Iron Maiden. It doesn't look like something I would have drawn, particularly not the nose and stuff.

"I'm pretty much of a homebody... I

Whether they tampered with that I can't say for sure; it just doesn't look like something I drew. The other one, after all the legal hassles with the character, the Mento character was gotten rid of, and they replaced it with another character, having someone try to draw in my style. It took me a few seconds to think, "Wait a minute, I don't remember ever drawing that character!" *(Laughter.)* I don't know who the character *is* no less drawing it. It was Mento, and since Mento is someone they're not allowed to use now...

ANDY: *They replaced it with the character Weed.*

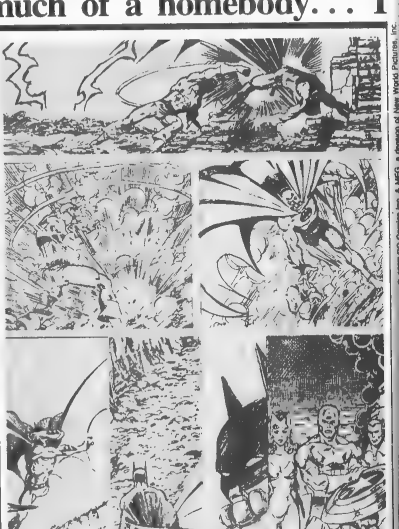
GEORGE: I think they had a legal responsibility to do so and, rather than having me redraw it, they had it redrawn in their own offices.

ANDY: *I know you aren't too pleased with the inking on your "Raven" stories...*

GEORGE: For the most part, I have not been. **Dave Cockrum** I give credit; he went through a very, very rough deadline to do that and he was told to ink it to look like **Perez** as opposed to looking like **Cockrum**, when I wouldn't have minded it looking like **Cockrum**. Hey, you know, you ink your own way. But they bought **Perez** and they were selling **Perez** and they wanted to keep **Perez**. The second reason why I wasn't happy with the inking is that I didn't particularly care for the way it came out — too many faces ended up being changed and didn't look like my work. I had to redraw some of the faces. On the last one, **Dan Adkins** is a fine inker but it looks like he was almost asked to ink that as-is, and wasn't getting paid to finish it, because there were no blacks put in... it basically ended up looking like a coloring book. I have not been very happy with and all the promises they make about getting these top talent people. Most of these people don't end up working there, or they may not have the right ones or the ones they themselves said. Of all the inkers they mentioned as possibly inking that last "Raven" story, **Dan Adkins** never even came up! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *You were also going to do an introduction to Rich Buckler's HOW TO DRAW COMICS book for Solson, but you pulled out. Why?*

GEORGE: I pulled out because, at first, when they talked about doing a book about drawing comics, I thought it was a nice idea. They said it was **Rich Buckler** doing it. Richard's a talented artist and everything; Rich and I have had disagreements in the past, but I thought, well, "Fine." The one thing that pretty much stopped me was when one person there — I forget who it was — asked me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in my introduction to mention why I believe that this would be the one book to really learn and that I think the artist is most qualified to teach that. It went beyond giving an introduction into...

ANDY: *Hype.*

GEORGE: ... an unqualified endorsement for something I probably would not have given that qualification. For one thing, there's no one artist who I believe has the authority to say he is the full purveyor of knowledge when it comes to handling a very tricky business like comic-book artwork. And, as far as I know, it was not **Rich Buckler**'s idea to have that said. I think it was an editorial judgement which I found offensive, because I wanted to do something that would have been generally about comics storytelling from my own limited experience — not something that tells a person to "Follow this person and you'll go to your path of riches..." *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *No pun intended?*

GEORGE: No pun intended!

ANDY: *You once said you thought it was incredible you got your name in the OVERSTREET PRICE GUIDE. Why do you consider that important?*

GEORGE: Because of the fans, all these types of things are important to me. You know, hey... I was a fan once, I still am. And I still get these little thrills of seeing my name in places where ordinarily I

like to stay at home with my wife. . .”

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wouldn't — with the other big names. There's a certain thrill. It's not like being listed for a Medal of Honor or anything, but it's like a nice little thing to happen.

ANDY: *Well, you've won so many awards in comics, including quite a few garnered here at the San Diego ComiCon. How do you feel about — I believe, from my research — you're the most-awarded artist in comics, beating Byrne and a whole bunch of others?*

GEORGE: If I am, I'm flattered. . . I'm also surprised! I could swear that John has definitely been much more awarded. I can remember years where all I saw was John's name on this award and that award. *(Laughter.)* If it's true, I'm very flattered and surprised. Until this year, I wasn't really aware of winning many awards. This year, I was winning awards without even knowing I was up for them. I didn't even know I had won the Eagle Award until I received a phone call from someone congratulating me. The American Comics Award thing for CRISIS, I didn't know about that. COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE, I received a call from **Marv Wolfman** telling me about that one. I'm incredibly flattered; I assume it was because of CRISIS. Many times in winning things, I've learned that you're winning based more on what the book is than on who you are and what your talent is. Like, I've won awards for two covers — neither one of them I thought were my best covers, but they happened to be on two important issues. The cover of CRISIS #7 won an award somewhere. I thought it was a nice cover, but not the best cover I ever did for the CRISIS, nor the best cover I did that year. But it was such an important issue, it attracted the most attention; Winning awards for being favorite is totally different from being best. I thank everyone for being favorite; I have always had doubts about being the best.

ANDY: *How does it feel to headline the guest list at a con, even above top people like Claremont or Stan Lee . . .*

GEORGE: I enjoy the notoriety, I enjoy the fact that it's important to a lot of people for me to be there. It's a great feeling. I don't do too many of those shows, because I'm pretty much of a homebody; I like to stay home with my wife. Of course, I'd be rather unfeeling if I said those things don't still give me a bit of a thrill.

ANDY: *They're a great ego boost.*

GEORGE: Sure. Just be careful to keep the ego in check, that's all. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Do you feel that the "critical" or "artistic" community dislikes your work because it's too successful or is it because you mainly draw superheroes?*

GEORGE: I hadn't noticed any prejudice on anyone's part — in the business, anyway.

ANDY: *I'm talking mainly some COMICS JOURNAL people. . .*

GEORGE: No. . . what criticisms they gave they are entitled to. Some of them are valid, some I might not consider valid. But again, it's their opinion. In the COMICS JOURNAL or any other magazine, I've found as many people who like my work as dislike it. If nothing else, it gets me to thinking if there's a valid criticism there. Sometimes, it's just that they don't like my style, and that goes for any critic or anyone in the buying public — everyone's entitled to their opinion. I used to be bothered by that a lot — when I'd get a criticism, I used to feel blue and somber, until I realized that I wouldn't be where I am today if I obviously didn't have something that people were buying and that a great majority of people liked. But there are bound to be people who don't like it. CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS received a lot of reviews — good, positive reviews — from a lot of harsher critics. Hey, it was a typical superhero story, but even superheroes can be done well.

ANDY: *Right.*

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"I also make a damn good living at it."

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GEORGE: I think it's a valid criticism that you kind of get tired of seeing only superheroes glutting the market. Let's face it — that's basically what I do, what I make my career at. And if I'm commercial, fine. If commercial is a negative thing to them, fine. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Are you surprised your career has come so far in eleven years?*

GEORGE: Am I surprised? Of course I am! I never thought I'd be in the "upper echelon" of this business, I was just happy drawing comics. To get the fame with it as well, that's a lot of gravy. I'm doing what I love, and the fact that I've got a good reputation and earn a good living at it . . . hey! The fact that the name **George Perez** doesn't just give a person a reason to say "Who?" *(Laughter.)* The fact that they even know who **George Perez** is, the fact that we're even doing this interview is, you know, a real kick!

ANDY: *How do you feel working in a field that the vast majority of the public has no interest in or respect for?*

GEORGE: One thing I found in almost everyone I've ever talked to, while they may have an ambivalence or a total disregard for the comics industry themselves — when you tell them what you do, they're fascinated as all hell. Despite everything — they may not read comics or despite whatever prejudices they have — when they meet someone who does comics, it fascinates for most people, because it is so unusual. Almost without fail you find someone who says they've read comics. Even if they've read only ARCHIE, or the CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED. But they *have* read comics. I have never been in a situation — then again, I've never gone to the Museum of Modern Art to an art critic and told him I'm a comics artist — but in no social situation have I been made to feel less than worthy because I draw comics. In fact, it's usually the other way — suddenly, I become a celebrity. Most people do not have a prejudice towards the *creators*; they may have a prejudice towards *comics*, but a lot of that is image and a lot of that is the comics, themselves. The image is built on something, and we've done a lot of it ourselves during our formative years. And it'll take a lot of doing to convince people that not all comics are the complement of juvenile delinquents. *(Laughter.)* I've never had the experience of feeling like a pariah because of the work I do.

ANDY: *How do you explain to the general public or the "normal" world what you do?*

GEORGE: I'm a cartoonist. I draw comic books. It's as simple and as straightforward as that. I used to be in the thing of "I'm a commercial artist, I'm a commercial illustrator." Now I say "I'm a cartoonist, I draw comic books." I'm very proud of that. I also make a damn good living at it. I mean, a lot of these people, if they're going to be snobs, the one advantage is that I make a damn decent living at it, probably many times more money than they do. *(Laughter.)* So whether they criticize it or not, I'm doing well. Then again, a prostitute does well, too — but you can't argue with them, either. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *What's your family think about comics?*

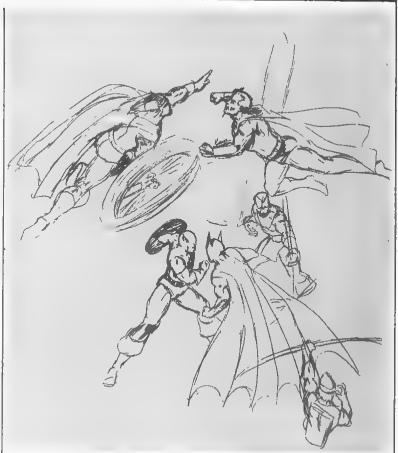
GEORGE: None of my family reads comics, but they love that I draw comics.

ANDY: *They don't even read yours?*

GEORGE: Very seldom. They're not interested, and when you consider the majority of comics are continued stories, you can understand why.

ANDY: *Yeah.*

GEORGE: So, like, you know, they look at the artwork; I'm the artist, so of course they're going to look at the artwork, and they're tickled pink. My wife *does* read the stories that I draw, and she likes them. She's obviously the biggest fan of my artwork. And my parents are tickled to death about the whole thing.



Undoubtedly, the first JLA/AVENGERS art from 1973!

ANDY: *Do you still see yourself doing comics eleven years from now?*

GEORGE: There's nothing else I would rather do. I've been asked to do other things, I've been approached about animation, about illustration, about storyboards . . . comics is what I enjoy doing, and what I feel I do best. Again, I really get a kick out of it. I don't want to do anything else — anything else, exclusively, that is.

ANDY: *Do you think you'll ever do any work outside comics, like a cover for TIME or NEWSWEEK or a line of greeting cards?*

GEORGE: I don't close my mind to that, but that's whatever the future holds. Whether my style is right for greeting cards I would find highly questionable. But who am I to judge? I would never have thought FAR SIDE greeting cards would be a success ten years ago, but it's here.

"I seem to have a large female fandom."

ANDY: *Have you ever been approached to do anything real odd? Tell us about some of your job offers . . .*

GEORGE: I did work for NATIONAL LAMPOON; they paid well, but it wasn't what I like to do. I was asked if I was interested in animation, but today's state of animation, I'm not particularly fond of. For one thing, my work is way too intricate to animate — too much line work to animate successfully no matter if you had the best animation. I've been approached about poster-type work or people wanting their van custom-painted. *(Laughter.)* Interesting offers, but very seldom do I pick 'em up. The only stuff I do from time to time is portrait work, like when friends are getting married. I don't do portraits for money, or portraits on commission, I do them because I want to. I have two friends who are getting married this year, two couples, and I'm doing a portrait of each of the couples for their wedding. And that I enjoy doing, strictly for my own pleasure.

ANDY: *When you're at a convention, George, you seem to project an aura that fans can come up and talk to you. How do you feel about them?*

GEORGE: Oh, I love the fans! Obviously, if they weren't buying, I wouldn't be drawing. I always want to treat the fans as if I were in their situation. I would definitely want my "star" to live up to my image of him — as far as humanly possible, anyway. And to me, that's important. There are some kids who feel at home; some kids feel *too* at home. But the grand majority are respectful and there are those that are so scared to be here, they're practically shivering, bringing a comic to be autographed. To me, they're the most important person to please, to make happy, because and if you can make them feel like they've met a human being who's actually a friendly person that's drawing a picture he loves so much, then I think you've really succeeded.

ANDY: *Tell us about your fans . . . what type of people are they?*

GEORGE: I've had fans in three-piece suits to T-shirts and sneakers. It varies. I have a fan who's older than I am, and now at thirty two, that's going some. And fans who are a good deal younger — young enough to be my children. They vary. You get surprised how many people are in different social strata. And it also depends on where you are. The fans in New York are totally different from the fans in California, as they are in Texas, as they are in Chicago. I've found no set group as far as fans are concerned. I seem to have a large female fandom — which is unusual — but it's probably because of the TEEN TITANS and the characters involved there. I'm one of the most accessible of the people in my business. There are a lot of people who have my home phone number and, as long as no one abuses it, they're perfectly welcome to it. I've had no problem with that, whatsoever. Never had any reason to regret it, and have no great reason to make any point of it, either. I've been very lucky.

ANDY: *Have you ever had anything weird happen due to your fame?*

GEORGE: There's always one fan, who's the bad image of the fan, who'll make it hard for other artists to want to talk to fans. This one fan put a bad taste in my mouth. He wanted a character sketch of a character *he* designed and he wanted it specific . . . I mean, he was constantly hounding every artist to draw *his way*. He actually *bit through one of my pencils* one time because he didn't like the way it was going, and I stood up and nearly wanted to send him through the wall . . .

ANDY: *He bit through a pencil?*

GEORGE: Yeah, he bit through a pencil; real crazy person I would not go to

"He bit through a pencil; real crazy."

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Great Krypton — it — it's Beppo, the Super-Monkey! From 1979.

a convention in this area for awhile and then when I finally did, the one thing I looked forward to was him coming and asking me for a sketch — and me just turning him down. The only person I've ever turned down for a sketch! At the time, I was sketching. Now I'm not sketching But I didn't like myself for doing that, and I went through a moratorium and stopped going to conventions for awhile, because *he* left a bad taste in *my* mouth and made me do something that was totally against my own nature. But that's very rare.

ANDY: *Do you ever get any strange mail or odd phone calls?*

GEORGE: Well, most people who have the nerve to call are arguably those who have something to say or want to buy something, if I have artwork to sell. But I don't get any weird phone calls. As far as stuff in the mail, the usual things — requests, people writing a school report and want to know a little more about the industry, or sending their own art samples to get a critique. If they're sending it through the mail to critique, it's something they're really going to want back. Most of the stuff is not really very good . . . but, again, at least they're interested.

ANDY: *There's a specific group, an APA (Amateur Press Association — called TITAN TALK, which is mainly devoted to the NEW TEEN TITANS, and to you, George.*

GEORGE: And to Marv

ANDY: *What are your feelings about that APA?*

GEORGE: I love it. To inspire that kind of a rabid following, I find it incredibly flattering. I remember the LEGION OF SUPERHEROES, and their INTERLAC APA. I first heard about it many years ago — you know, the LEGION has had a long, long fandom. I found it awe inspiring to think that people are that much into any group of characters. When TITAN TALK was put together a few years ago, Marv and I were both surprised for a book that wasn't that old — for the NEW TEEN TITANS — to get that kind of praise and honor from a group of people. We realized that a lot of it was also based on the nostalgic value of the *old* TEEN TITANS, as well as the new incarnation. When the first APA came out, it did provide names and addresses, and in some cases, phone numbers. I called up a couple of people — and needless to say *shocked* a few people — just to tell them how much I appreciate it, and to give them a chance to ask for information. I've never written a letter to any of the magazines, because of sheer lack of time. I'm not a letter writer; there's never been a letter by **George Perez** printed *anywhere*. So I didn't want them to think, "Why doesn't he write, doesn't he care?" In this way, they know I care.

ANDY: *You once said you were going to retire for a few months after CRISIS. What prompted you to change your mind?*

GEORGE: John Byrne.

ANDY: *Pardon?*

GEORGE: John Byrne. That sonofabitch. *(Laughter.)* Here I was, ready to say, "I'm not going to do another series." I could see doing an odd story here and there, and a graphic novel, and then **John Byrne** decided he was going to do SUPERMAN. But with **John Byrne** doing SUPERMAN, and with all the plans they had for BATMAN — WONDER WOMAN they didn't seem to have anyone who was interested in doing the book. I couldn't see that happening, because I had an interest in doing WONDER WOMAN. Orginally, I didn't want to do the new series because of its schedule — it would have come out two months after CRISIS, which would have meant drawing it while I was still drawing CRISIS. But they rescheduled it to a *year* later for me, — if it weren't for John doing all thse nifty things with SUPERMAN, I probably wouldn't have said okay to WONDER WOMAN.

"John Byrne. That sonofabitch. If it weren't

ANDY: *So you blame it all on John?*

GEORGE: Yeah, yeah...

ANDY: *It all goes at his feet. We'll get to WONDER WOMAN and HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE in just a little bit... but first, a couple of diverse questions. How did you find working with your major influence, Curt Swan, and the last issue of SUPERMAN that you two worked on with Alan Moore?*

GEORGE: It was a dream come true. Probably one of the highlights of my career! I loved inking his work, and learned a lot about drawing while I was inking him. Certain things about anatomy, certain things about subtleness, certain things about drawing hands. I learned a lot from that one issue of SUPERMAN that I inked on **Curt Swan**. I just can't speak highly enough of it.

ANDY: *How did you find working with Alan Moore, who's another big favorite of yours?*

GEORGE: I loved working with **Alan Moore** but it was only on a secondary basis. I didn't have anything to do with creating the storyline or doing anything interpreting the storyline. I was basically there as an observer. I loved reading it, enjoyed the essence of the story, but I had no creative input into it in any fashion whatever — with the exception of embellishing Curt. So I enjoyed it, but I'd love to work with Alan on a much more hands-in basis!

ANDY: *Who else would you like to work with?*

GEORGE: I would love to ink something on **Jack Kirby**, I would love to ink other people, who are more away from my style, like **Carmine Infantino**; also, some who are a little closer. I've already talked to **Ross Andru** about doing something when I get a chance. **Steve Lightle**, **Stan Woch**, the newer people. **Paris Cullins** I'd like to take a crack at. There are some — like **Bill Sienkiewicz**, whose style is so organically his, I would not know even how to approach it. **Bill Sienkiewicz** is **Sienkiewicz** when he's pure **Sienkiewicz**. Any time someone works on Bill, it seems to dilute him; he's best when he's at his zany self. And I am sure there are other people I'm just not thinking of right now. There are a lot of people I would love to ink, since I'm getting into that more. I like inking, and there's a certain pleasure about it with other people, because it challenges me to understand a lot about drawing. **Jose Garcia Lopez** is another big one I would love to tackle. I think a **Garcia Lopez / Perez** collaboration would look nice, and I will be inking **John Byrne** for a proposed SUPERMAN / WONDER WOMAN team-up, either in ACTION COMICS ANNUAL or in ACTION COMICS #600.

ANDY: *Well!*

GEORGE: Either one, depending on how the schedules work.

ANDY: *What characters would you like to work on?*

GEORGE: After CRISIS, you're asking a question like that?

ANDY: *Well, I know you love the LEGION...*

GEORGE: I'd love to do the METAL MEN. They bring back fond childhood memories. ADAM STRANGE, METAMORPHO... I guess that mid-Sixties surge, when they were introducing a lot of characters that I have a fond recollection of. I was really into buying comics at the time, and those DC's really

"I'd love to do the Metal Men."

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for him, I wouldn't have okayed WW."

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interested me. I was leaning toward Marvel, but those DCs really held me because they *were* new. METAL MEN, obviously, were not — but they always held a fascination for me. And now that they've changed the line-up, I definitely wouldn't mind handling a JUSTICE LEAGUE, if the chance ever came about for that. And there are so many . . . I'd like to try JUDGE DREDD — hey, you know, I've never tried JUDGE DREDD before! *(Laughter.)* And I wouldn't mind getting a chance at a nice Facist storyline.

ANDY: *How about a BROTHER POWER, THE GEEK, story?*

GEORGE: I never even read BROTHER POWER, THE GEEK. I might have seen one issue on the stands. I couldn't even tell you what the character's about! I saw a cover of WHO'S WHO and I still don't know who he is.

ANDY: *And what about, because of the similarity between the names, what about a PREZ story by Perez?*

GEORGE: Well, PREZ is definitely one comic I think should have been nuked. *(Laughter.)* I have enough nightmares with that name!

ANDY: *Ever had anybody confuse the two of you?*

GEORGE: Well, **Fred Hembeck** one time made a joke in one of his cartoons, "Perez, not to be confused with PREZ," or something like that.

ANDY: *What's happened to your and Marv's seven year plan for the JANUS graphic novel?*

GEORGE: Well, in our case it's seven years — in his case, it's fifteen. Again, that's something that Marv has to decide, because I believe he has certain contractual details he's going to want, since they are his characters for so many years. If he can get that through the main company — if it's DC or independent — that's up to him. If it is with anyone other than DC, that limits me, because I'm on exclusive contract and I cannot work outside DC within the next three years. Marv has my understanding and blessing that — if he finds someone else that he wants to work with, and a deal that he wants to work with at the time, and he does not want to wait until I'm available — he's perfectly within his rights, with my blessing, of doing JANUS with someone else, for someone else. JANUS is basically Marv's baby, which I would love to help him and do some nice artwork for. But I came in really at the tail end of it.

ANDY: *Haven't you already pencilled some of it, though?*

GEORGE: I pencilled just one or two pages. His concept keeps changing so much, and keeps growing. Some stuff, he was going to use in JANUS he's probably used in other stories, little bits and pieces — so a story that's growing for fifteen years probably bears little resemblance to what he originally conceived. Whatever happens with JANUS, Marv will have to make the final decision.

ANDY: *What is the book about?*

GEORGE: I'm not free to talk about it, and I might be totally wrong.

ANDY: *Well, it was a sort of modern-day horror story.*

GEORGE: Whether it still is, I don't know

ANDY: *Both issues of HISTORY look fabulous. How did you and Marv work together on HISTORY?*

GEORGE: Marv was of the opinion that the book would be primarily an art book. The art would be the thing carrying the book with the text being an add-on — basically, a "coffee table" type of book. It was actually nothing more than a primer to the DC Universe with illustrations. After we decided what actual continuity was — since, after CRISIS, it was such a confusion as to what existed and what didn't — **Bob Greenberger** gave me all the references I needed, based on the timeline of what followed what. In some cases, certain things were provided by DC that Marv had not thought of putting into the book, so it ended up being a cross thing; it became up to me to take all references and information given to me and collate a visual package out of it. Beyond the initial session, there was no further plotting done until after the artwork was drawn. I just basically took the timeline as given to me and illustrated it, knowing how many pages I was allowed and what page would face the other, so I could have some visual symmetry. And then Marv started writing around that, sometimes calling me up to find out what

"It became up to me to take all the references

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Even the skyways are getting traffic-clogged these days.

I had in mind — particularly if I was drawing obscure characters which he himself might not have been familiar with. Many of the western characters, Marv had no idea of or real inclination of putting them in, 'cause they weren't major characters. The same thing with some of the war characters and some of the obscure superheroes of the Second World War. Most of the choices were left up to me; I was the one that had to fit it all in, and tried to make it still a steady flow. The only thing that put a crimp in it was when the sudden change in format came along, from three Baxter-style books *a la* NATHANIEL DUSK — wherein after thirty-two pages there is a definite cut, and then another thirty-two pages, followed by the third issue with the final thirty-two pages — to the prestige format, the way the DARK KNIGHT was done. Suddenly, both issues were forty-eight pages long, which meant that the page that I originally drew as page thirty-two to end a sequence had to be... part of it had to be scrapped. Part of it was used, part of it wasn't, in order not to make such a noticeable cut in the storyline, in the actual story flow.

ANDY: *Did that change also result in scrapping the posters that were supposed to be included in each issue?*

GEORGE: That's right. Although the poster idea is being talked about for the limited edition Graphitti paperback or graphic novel — I don't know what they're calling the actual packaging. The way that was done with DARK KNIGHT is that it was all printed in a one volume limited edition. The same with HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE. Obviously, there will be the two issues of all ninety-six pages, plus something like thirty-two extra pages with illustrations and text of characters in the timeline. I've been asked to have an illustration, plus an 800-word text piece on Wonder Woman — my viewpoint on the Wonder Woman character, with reference to the original **Charles Moulton** version. And the hopeful thing to do — again at this point it's an idea — is a triple fold-out as a jam with anywhere from thirty to fifty characters, each drawn by an individual artist. **Joe Kubert** has been asked about designing the entire thing, and we'd all follow the design based on that. Obviously my contribution would be Wonder Woman. They would try to get other artists who are synonymous with the characters to draw their respective characters. It could be anywhere from thirty to fifty artists, or even seventy-five to one hundred artists, depending on how many work per piece! It could end up being a very nice package — not just a reprint of a book as it originally appeared, but a lot of new stuff being done for it.

ANDY: *When is this due out?*

GEORGE: We're hoping for summer release, but obviously that depends on how fast we can get this stuff done.

ANDY: *How did you enjoy Karl Kesel's inks on your books?*

GEORGE: I love **Karl Kesel**'s inks. I

and collate a visual package out of it."

definitely want to work more with that man, and he's expressed a similar interest. We're hoping that our schedules someday will permit it. But most definitely I'd want to work with **Karl Kesel** again. He's one of the best inkers in the business today and he's still learning things every day. I definitely have nothing but admiration for what he did with the HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE, and what he's doing now for John and Luke on their respective books — I think he's definitely a major talent.

ANDY: *Did you ink any of the pages yourself?*

GEORGE: I didn't ink any, as opposed to the first fifteen or so pages. The page showing the heads of both Highfather and Darkseid on either side, with Supertown and Apokalips both shown in the same picture, that's reproduced directly from my pencils. I penciled super tightly. Also, the sequence with the gods being created — a favorite piece of mine — was reproduced from my pencils. I did not ink any page there. The only exceptions, in those pages inked by Karl, were the creation of the Anti-Matter Universe, with the Big Bang at the dawn of time — which was originally painted by me, but wouldn't reproduce well. So Karl redid it as a line drawing and **Tom Zuiko** colored it. That may be the only one he actually had to ink. I'm not sure. But everything up to the point of the Darkseid page was reproduced from my pencils. Certain things like the head of Sgt. Rock and the posters featuring the Ei Papaguayo and —

ANDY: *Cinnamon?*

GEORGE: Bat Lash and Cinnamon were reproduced from my pencils.

ANDY: *About Tom Zuiko's coloring: Do you work closely with him and the others?*

GEORGE: In the case of the others, not as much. But, with Tom, yes. Tom was using the airbrush I lent him to do the coloring. I told him some ideas, other ideas were noted on the artwork, and he would call up to find out certain things. He also took a lot of initiative on his own, which is exactly what I welcome. The other colorists, most of them came in without my knowing about it. I didn't find out until later that **Tom Zuiko** was not going to be able to color the whole second issue. Tom did the majority of the pin-up shots, but all the others basically did it on their own, which means there was at least one mistake that I can remember right off the bat, in which **Tommy Tomorrow** was miscolored as Rip Hunter. That might have annoyed Marv a little, since he specifically asked for Rip Hunter not to be used in the history book because of the time travel routine that he got mixed in as a character. In fact, I drew Rip Hunter's sphere on one page and, in the finished book, it was changed into something like a planet or whatever — anyway, they decided not to use Rip Hunter's sphere.

In a couple of places, characters were changed... for instance, in the New Justice League, originally they had a new character indicated, so I just drew in some ambiguous character with no real face or form to him, and he was later redrawn by **Karl Kesel** as Captain Atom. In the Wanderers piece, I inadvertently left out a character, and **Karl Kesel** added that person. And, in SUICIDE SQUAD — the new one — one of the members, I believe Nemesis, is in the picture that was printed, though I do not believe I drew him in. I don't know *who* I drew now. Some things were being formulated at the time the book was being drawn, it was too late to ask me to redraw it, so **Karl Kesel** was responsible for any redrawings done from that point on.

ANDY: *A last question on HISTORY... what did you think of the covers, as far as the really ugly lettering design?*

GEORGE: I thought it was fantastic! I liked it that way!

ANDY: *Really?!?*

GEORGE: Yes! I thought it was a nice idea, because it really gave it a totally unique appearance — it looked like a book, as opposed to a comic book, and it was one of the few ways they could use **Perez** artwork — which is what they were selling — and still make a cover that showed everything. The only objection I had about it was that the first and second cover only had, like, the difference of one or two

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COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

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"I had to get books on mythology."

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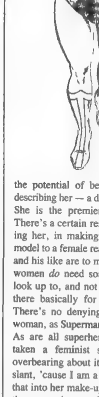
pictures being changed. I would have preferred the second cover having a lot or all the illustrations inside the lettering done totally differently — not the same ones. Like, Darkseid would be replaced by Superman, or something. I would have preferred more of the artwork having been changed. It probably wasn't done because of time. But that was the only thing that bothered me. I thought it was a splendid idea! I know some people were not pleased with the idea of a montage cover, and when they told me they were doing a montage, I was a little concerned. But the way they did it, because of the time involved, and because I had no time to do a new cover for that — nor did I actually have any ideas of what I could do — I was very pleased. I thought it gave it a unique look. It will not be the same look done for the limited edition trade paperback — I'm not exactly sure what they plan to do . . . there are so many other illustrators now, in the special edition, they can use anyone from a painter like **Billy Sienkiewicz** or **Howie Chaykin** or whoever; they can actually use an established painter 'cause they're not trying to sell it as a **Perez** book now, since there are so many artists other than **Perez** contributing.

ANDY: *Let's go on to your current project, which is earning you more fame and glory. You explained before why you took on WONDER WOMAN as a book, but why do you like the character so much?*

GEORGE: I find the character loaded with incredible potential. When you look through Greek mythology there's so many creatures and gods and locales that are exotic, they just scream out for, you know, rock 'em sock 'em visuals. She always had



the potential of being — as a way of describing her — a distaff version of Thor. She is the premier female superhero. There's a certain responsibility in handling her, in making her as much a role model to a female readership as Superman and his like are to male readers. And the women *do* need someone that they can look up to, and not just a woman who's there basically for a sex appeal look. There's no denying she's an attractive woman, as Superman is an idealized man. As are all superheroes. I've definitely taken a feminist slant without being overbearing about it — more a *humanist* slant, 'cause I am a feminist — building that into her make-up more, but showing that extremists are the thing that actually kill any kind of movement The Amazons are not perfect, and man is not perfect, but there is good in both. Diana, being the innocent who has not lived with the Amazons all these centuries — she's fairly new to everything — is much more open-minded than the Amazons are. And that makes her very important in showing the state of relations between man and woman. It becomes a nice little morality play as well as a great chance for some visuals. Like issue #8 of WONDER WOMAN, called "Time Passages" — it's four series of letters or diaries showing four different women's viewpoints on Wonder Woman, and their reactions to her. That also marks the first issue of WONDER WOMAN that I have written on my own, because it's not being done as a comic book. There are no word balloons! It's like a cross between a comic book and a HISTORY OF THE DC UNIVERSE. The diaries or letters are written on the side of the artwork, and the artwork, in panel progression, is separately. It's a first person point of view by four different people. My first professional writing chore on WONDER WOMAN, and probably not my last . . .

ANDY: *Well now, speaking about your co-writers on the book, what went on with Greg Potter that he only did two issues?*

GEORGE: Unlike Len or anyone, Greg was not a full-time writer. In fact, I think he had a full-time job; he worked, I believe, in advertising. And partially because of my own schedule, the book kept constantly being delayed, even after we had done a first plot, which we totally redid anyway. The first issue was fully scripted, and we ended up not using most of it. So after issue #2, which was taking him longer to do, because his job was also requiring more work from him — he seems to be doing quite well in advertising — he had to finally call up and say he couldn't handle it. He had the extra con-

"Women need someone that they can

straints of having to deal with deadlines which unfairly were tossed to him because of me. He originally had all the time in the world, but it took me so long to get to the series, that by the time the book started going, he was already behind schedule. So he had to bow out. **Len Wein**, among other writers, had expressed interest in doing the series, and considering I couldn't write the series, I didn't have the time . . . I welcomed **Len Wein** aboard, with the proviso that I be the full plotter of the book, not the co-plotter. The book would be solely plotted by me, with editorializing by **Karen Berger**. Issues #1 through #6 were tying up the origin of Wonder Woman as originally set up by Greg and myself. Now, I wanted to go on to tangents that were totally different than the original view that Greg had; I mean, the WONDER WOMAN I'm doing now bears no resemblance to the original concept before I got onto it. And it's becoming more apparent that, one of these days, I will be scripting the book on my own. It's not any reflection on **Len Wein's** contribution, because I would have a hard act to follow with such an experienced writer.

ANDY: *So you've gone from SHE-DEVILS to WONDER WOMAN as far as writing . . .*

GEORGE: Yeah, but I guess SHE-DEVILS was not a professional job, SHE-DEVILS was during my pre-enlightened period, with the women as nice sexual objects to be abused and just, you know, stripped down naked. *(Laughter.)* Age makes one wiser, marriage makes one wiser. WONDER WOMAN is a reflection of, you know, the way I've changed . . . my maturity finally caught up to me.

ANDY: *How are the sales?*

GEORGE: Sales are better than anyone thought the book ever had a right to. Sales are doing well — not comparable to SUPERMAN; in fact, last I heard, it was maybe a little less than half the sales of SUPERMAN — but when you consider we are talking about WONDER WOMAN compared to a **John Byrne** version of the Man of Steel, we are talking about a *phenomenal* rise in its sales figures. I believe one issue of WONDER WOMAN now probably outsells four or five issues of WONDER WOMAN in its original run. The book is doing *very* well. It's outselling so many other books, particularly DC's own line. It outsells the TITANS, it outsells quite a number of books now. It is one of DC's better sellers and, thankfully, the company has a lot of better sellers now.

ANDY: *What are some of the future promotions DC is working on for WONDER WOMAN?*

GEORGE: Well, I'm planning a storyline starting from issue #10, dealing with Diana having to prove why she is necessary to man's world — and why the Amazons are necessary for man's survival, now that the threat of Ares is gone. The working title is "A Trial of The Gods," but that will *not* be the title. It'll resolve all the last bits of the origin of Wonder Woman: going into who is Diana, the one who she's named after; why does she wear a costume patterned after the American flag; and with all the superheroes hanging around — she meets the superheroes in issue #8, which is my belated LEGENDS tie-in *(Laughter)* — why is Wonder Woman important in a man's world? What makes her unque and not just another superhero — or superheroine? She finds out she's not the only one on earth. In LEGENDS, she met Black Canary. So I do play that up in issue #8. She does meet a woman crimefighter, and she will have knowledge of others. So she has to prove to the gods the importance of being both an Amazon and of being Wonder Woman. And it's gonna have . . . visually it's gonna be a striking storyline, because she'll be going into the bowels of Paradise Island — into that pit which I've been referring to since issue #1 — where she will meet the creatures of Olympic myth. According to the myths they were killed, but death is not the same for these Olympic monsters as it would be to us. Many of them have been relegated to this Pandora's box existence, which Diana herself will be thrown into as a gauntlet that she must persevere through.

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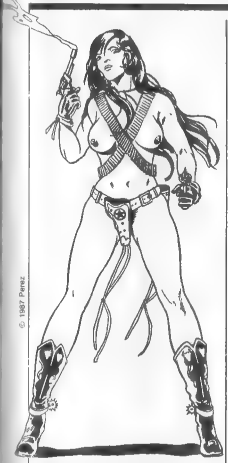
look up to, not just for sex appeal."



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"SHE-DEVILS was during my pre-enlightened period, with the women as nice sexual objects to be abused. Wonder Woman is a reflection of the way I've changed."

ANDY: *Who are these creatures?*

GEORGE: We have the Chimera, that's part lion, part bird, part goat; we have the Gorgon, which Medusa has already been established as her shell, that they ripped her heart from to create Decay; oh, God... I had a list in my hand but I don't have it with me! There are a number of creatures from mythology that will be used, and as a promotional thing that DC's planning, the cover of issue #10 will be a gatefold cover to out do the cover of issue #1. It will not only wrap around, but will wrap into itself — you'll have to open up the front cover and then fold it out to get this three-panel effect that will spread out to three covers, basically. That panorama will only be in the direct sales market. The newsstands will only receive the front part of that cover — actually, the middle. They will not get the gatefold, and the back cover will be a regular ad.

ANDY: *Hmm.*

GEORGE: And that particular cover will be reproduced as a poster at the end of the "Gods..." storyline, which is tentatively issue #13. At that point, Wonder Woman will be fully, clearly defined; her mission on Earth will be defined. And not only her origins, but a lot of things having to do with other characters who already have been introduced in the series, plus one character who was introduced in issue #7. The storylines dealing with them will be clarified and, in one case — a tie-in with DC's new crossover series MILLENIUM by **Steve Englehart**, one of the characters in the trial sequence will also be a spinoff to MILLENIUM, which is basically the next step after LEGENDS and CRISIS. It's the next crossover series.

ANDY: *Let's see... I got a little ahead of myself on the questions there. I was first talking about the book, and, in specific, how it is so steeped in mythology. Did that require a lot of research on your part?*

GEORGE: Yes, very much so. I had to get books on mythology. Some were provided for me — people provided me with a lot of theses and reports on mythology, in many cases relating to comic books. One person wrote a thesis — a guy named **John Palmer**, who I thanked in the first issue — "Wonder Woman from an Amazon Mythology Perspective," in which he actually related how some of the mythology could be angled to work in WONDER WOMAN. Much of that was used; particularly, it gave me the idea which worked best for me of how to avoid too many conflicts with the Amazon mythology as written by the writers of that time. Taking the contradictions from several writers — where Antiope and Hippolyte are referred to as sisters, sometimes as two separate people not related, or sometimes as the same person. I took that basic confusion and said, all right, they will be two separate people. I did make them sisters, that way everything that happens to Heracle's relationship with Antiope and Hippolyte *after* the rape and capture of the Amazons can be justified by having those two women separate into two separate Amazon factions. Everything that mythology wrote about Hippolyte and Antiope is what happened to Antiope — it freed me to use Hippolyte on Paradise Island without having to contradict the legends as written many years before I ever got around to it. *(Laughter.)* So the research really helped a lot in actually devising a clear way of keeping the Amazons true to their mythological roots, yet individual. They are *DC's* Amazons, with mythological roots based on the stories written by... **Hesiod** and other

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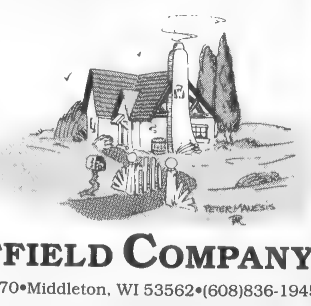

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"Yeah, well, I redesigned the gods."

George, playing Sheriff File in 110 IN THE SHADE, a 1972 high school play.

writers, yet still free enough that I can use them without being tied down to those myths.

ANDY: *Now you also have to redesign all the gods for the book, right?*

GEORGE: Yeah, well I redesigned the gods because we wanted the book to look different. I decided to do the gods new because I wanted them to be uniquely WONDER WOMAN's gods, as opposed to my TITANS gods. I didn't want even a TITANS crossover. These — they were unique unto themselves. Certain things were kept in, like when **Greg Potter** was writing the book, he did have Steve Trevor come in and he was now a United States Air Force colonel, so I kept that. I didn't particularly care for Steve Trevor . . . but *aging* him was something I decided to do. And, in future storylines, one of the things I resolve to do is probably resign Steve Trevor's commission; he will leave the United States Air Force to get rid of his military standing.

ANDY: *Hmm.*

GEORGE: Etta Candy was totally introduced, reintroduced by me; there was no Etta Candy listed in **Greg Potter's** entire overview of WONDER WOMAN. Etta was brought in as a nostalgia piece, because I wanted someone who did not look like a standard comic book female *(Laughter.)* Someone who would not be a source of ridicule, either, which is the way the original Etta Candy was — a young fat girl, who was there for comic relief. Etta Candy, my version, is not comical relief. She has wit, she has soul, she is not there strictly to act as a buffoon. And her being made into the military attache, I took that straight out of the original TV series of WONDER WOMAN based on **Beatrice Collins** playing the role of Etta Candy, where she was General Blankenship's attache. I wasn't tied down with past continuity as I thought I might be; with WONDER WOMAN, I've had a lot more freedom than probably others have had with their character's revitalization.

ANDY: *Well, they didn't have anything to lose with the character . . .*

GEORGE: Exactly. Well, for one thing, as of issue #7, Diana is Princess Diana, there *is* no Diana Prince; there is no reference to her as Diana Prince, other than her press agent trying to establish that maybe we should give her a different name so that she isn't confused with another Princess Diana . . . *(Laughter.)* And Diana says there's no reason why she should hide under a mask. So Diana Prince does not exist in the new Wonder Woman legend. She is Princess Diana of Themyscira II, or Paradise Island, as it's called.

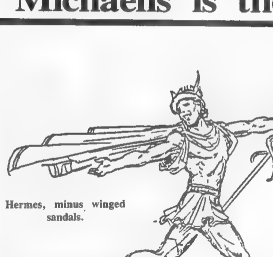
ANDY: *Does the world know about Paradise Island?*

GEORGE: Yes. Well, Diana tells about it. I also establish that she uses the winged sandals of Hermes to get from the island to man's world; only that way can she get there. You cannot fly over it unless in the case of Steve Trevor who was mystically done, because he got there through Aries. But no one can just *fly* to Paradise Island. And no one can fly *out* of Paradise Island. Diana is the only one who can do that, other than the gods. I've given her — again taken from the mythology — the winged sandals are Hermes' gift to her so she can now travel without him from one place to another.

ANDY: *Well, we've just discussed some of your views of some of the characters. Let me get more specific about a couple of them. Now Wonder Woman herself, Princess Diana, how old is she?*

GEORGE: I would figure she's somewhere in her early twenties. Initially they had definitely nailed her down to something like twenty four. In fact, I

"Michaelis is the sacrificial lamb;



Hermes, minus winged sandals.

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believe in the preview insert that they had of Wonder Woman inside MAN OF STEEL #6 they did state her age as twenty-four. I had that caption deleted in the final printed book because I did not want a definite age to be pointed out. She could be anywhere from her twenties or she might be a woman who has managed to keep . . . who does have some immortality. I like the idea of her being in her twenties 'cause it frees me for another bit of plot contrivance that's being handled in the special "God's Trial" storyline that would not be available to me if she were much older than, say twenty four years old. Also, I did want to firmly establish she is an infant by Amazon standards, and that she is even chronologically much younger than Steve Trevor. There is no romantic link between Steve Trevor and Diana at this time. It's like, he is a male supporting character; I'm not going to make him a strong male supporting character and I seem to be succeeding. But he's not going to be a Lois Lane character for his distaff Wonder Woman type. And also, Steve has become a strong enough character that he can stand on his own . . .

Cary Bates is using Steve Trevor in a CAPTAIN ATOM story. So, with input from me as to how to handle the character. In fact, the way Cary's handling it he'll progress as a character so when he comes back into WONDER WOMAN I can work from that point on and further use the character the way I had planned; it's a crossover where he still advances as a character, but Cary provides me with a great way of having the character progress without me having to stop an issue of WONDER WOMAN to do that. By having him in CAPTAIN ATOM, Cary does me the favor of writing a good story with Steve Trevor that makes him even more interesting as a character, and then I get him back with all that stuff behind him and utilize that in WONDER WOMAN.

ANDY: *Now you've said that without Steve Trevor there would be no Wonder Woman. What did you mean by that?*

GEORGE: Well, that'll be apparent in the storyline. That's one of those little teasers I put in. Julia, Steve Trevor, Wonder Woman, and a lot of other people are intertwined without them really knowing why, and we'll find out a lot of it in the storyline. Because a subplot in the "God's Trial" sequence is a bit of a familial storyline with Steve Trevor, 'cause of what Steve Trevor now has to deal with when he finds out about the death of his father. And that will have certain ramifications as far as revealing some further points in this new legend in the Wonder Woman mythos.

ANDY: *You can't say anything more about that?*

GEORGE: That's it!

ANDY: *Okay.*

GEORGE: Enough to whet the appetite — that's all it needs to be!

ANDY: *Now what about Julia Kapatellis and her daughter Vanessa?*

GEORGE: Julia and Vanessa will be continuing characters. Originally when I suggested a female character, again in **Greg Potter's** original version — Greg had a *male* character find Wonder Woman, in fact it was a priest — and it didn't fit well with me . . . I really wanted a female role model for Diana on man's world. So Julia was brought in. And initially before I brought her out, when she was just a character in discussion, Karen had suggested that we need someone to kill off in a grand scale during the battle with Ares, that the character Julia was going to be killed. But after the first issue, introducing the character and with the way I brought her in, the way I discover her, and the way Len fleshed her out with the dialog, Karen and everyone who read the character fell in love with Julia Kapatellis and there was no way she was going to be slaughtered any time soon. *(Laughter.)* She is going to be around for an extended period of time, as a major supporting character. She acts initially as Wonder Woman's guide to man's world..Beyond that, there's not . . . there are certain things that will be dealt with, including that psychedelic, deja vu sequence that she went through in issue #3, her introduction, which touched a talisman, that will be further explained in the series. And also, in the case of Vanessa, I definitely want a young girl's perspective on Wonder Woman. Someone who would be seeing her strictly from a young girl's eyes. And Vanessa becomes a valuable perspective there. And there's no way I'm going to off Vanessa anytime soon. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Now what about Matthew Michaelis?*

GEORGE: Michaelis was brought in because we needed someone to show that Steve Trevor isn't an isolationist; he must have other people he can be friends with. More about Michaelis will be handled in issue #6. Michaelis *is* the sacrificial lamb; Michaelis will be the one killed. Since Julia is not, Michaelis is. It's turned out Michaelis is also Greek. So his name is Greek. I took the name from a customer I used to deal with when I was a bank teller. I loved her last name and I've used it now. And he also will provide a little bit of sub-plot into the time passages story because we are in a situation where he is dead, and I did not want him to die — which he does at the end of issue #6 — and not have ramifications. He *was* a friend of Steve Trevor's. I do have a shot in issue #7 where Steve is reading about services for Michaelis and he is very wounded by the death of his friend. Death is not something which someone takes lightly. I also want Diana to explain what the feeling of "loss" is — this is an idea that came from my wife. And I'm having

Michaelis will be the one killed."

in issue #8 — again by the time of this interview this will have been past tense anyway — Mrs. Michaelis wants to meet Diana because she's heard all these stories the military is trying to hush up. The Ares Assault, they're not going to think anyone's going to believe any of this, and they don't want people to panic and think that the military actually tried to destroy the world. But she wants to meet this woman that they're trying to hide. So there is a meeting with Mrs. Michaelis and with Diana, with Julia acting as . . . not as interpreter; Mrs. Michaelis would also speak Greek anyway, but just basically there as moral support, since she was also there . . . Etta Candy's out on assignment and can't be there. And it's the first time that Diana, up front, has ever experienced loss. Has ever seen someone experience loss. During her lifetime no Amazon has died. So she has never experienced a personal loss; now she can understand what her mother was afraid of if she had died. She's never experienced that before. And she will cry, because she's never seen anyone go through that. It will make Julia start to reminisce, because she is a widow . . . and also it will establish a knowledge of something that Diana is unfamiliar with, and that is the bonds of marriage. She sees . . . she made the comment about the ring in issue #5, I think, about the wedding ring that she saw Michaelis wear, that she also noticed Julia wore a similar type of band. Marriage is

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"Oh yeah! I know that — before she

something she's unfamiliar with firsthand. Again, she might have been taught some of this, because of teachers, obviously knew about a form of marriage according to the Greeks, ancient Greece. But these are all *new things* to her. At a point in issue #8 where she's going to go to the military so she can prove that all the things they said about her are true . . . she can deflect bullets, she can lift a tank — although not clear over her head the way Superman can, she can lift a tank and tilt it over, but I don't want to make her *too* strong — but . . . and I lost my train of thought . . .

ANDY: *You were talking about the rings and learning stuff . . .*

GEORGE: Let's see, the military . . . Well, I just lost where I was going on that one! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *That's okay . . .*

GEORGE: I can't remember what I was leading to on that. . .

ANDY: *Well, let's go on to the next thing, the gods. What effect are the gods going to have on —?*

GEORGE: Oh, yeah! I know what — before she does the military thing, she *prays*! Prayer is obviously something very important to her — it's part of her . . . her makeup, and she prays to the gods. Like she would if she were going to the beginning of a contest. They alluded, and by implication, prayed at the beginning of the contest where she was picked as the Wonder Woman. That's what I was trying to get to — I do have a sequence of her actually praying, to establish that religion is very strong for this character.

ANDY: *So . . . what effect are the gods going to have on the future of the book?*

GEORGE: That's what the "God's Trial" will ascertain. There are a lot of things that I want to work in using the gods, including maybe a future storyline where one or two of the gods do come to man's world. There are certain things that are unique about the gods, as opposed to the Amazons. The gods, even though they still have all the accoutrements of ancient Greece, that's by choice. If they were to come to man's world, they've seen man's world progress; it wouldn't be alien to them, unlike the Amazons, unlike Diana. They know if they go into a city, they know exactly what everything in the city is. It wouldn't be strange to them. And using that as a jumping off point, it makes for a different point of view for the gods, as opposed to . . . they're not strangers in a strange land, they're superior beings in a strange land — not much different from the superheros, when you get down to it. And to make them unique, I have an idea for a storyline which I'm not going to tell now, utilizing that idea of the gods making them different from the Amazons in that way.

ANDY: *Now the Ares plot which winds up in #6, apparently will functionally get rid of Ares. Are we going to be seeing him again?*

GEORGE: Chances are he will be subliminally involved. I have no future plans at this point for Ares. Again, he's like Trigon and the way Galactus actually should have been initially, is that he's a little, all-too-powerful. Ares went berserk in this series. And that gets taken care of in issue #6. Beyond that, I don't want to play with Ares as a major character too much because he is just way too powerful. In issue #6 Wonder Woman does not beat him; he beats the living crap out of Wonder Woman. And Wonder Woman realizes she could never beat him on a hand to hand confrontation. So she beats him in the only other way that's been given to her — her wisdom, her knowledge, her savvy. She's not Superman, she doesn't fight with her fists, 'cause fists first is not the way she was trained. She prefers not to fight if she can avoid it. And her wisdom, the use of her lasso, is what wins the day for her. She beats Ares not by really beating him, but by showing him that he's nuts if he continues in the path he's going. If he allows man to destroy himself, all his worshippers are gone. If he gets such an enormous high from the ultimate destruction, then he has absolutely nowhere to go from there. Suddenly he will no longer exist, 'cause there's nothing to keep his existence anymore. And she convinces him of this, and that's what makes her unique in the story. I did not build up a gigantic fight, although she herself initially does try it —

"Wonder Woman beats Ares by showing him that he's nuts if he continues in the path he's going. If he allows man to destroy himself, all his worshippers are gone."

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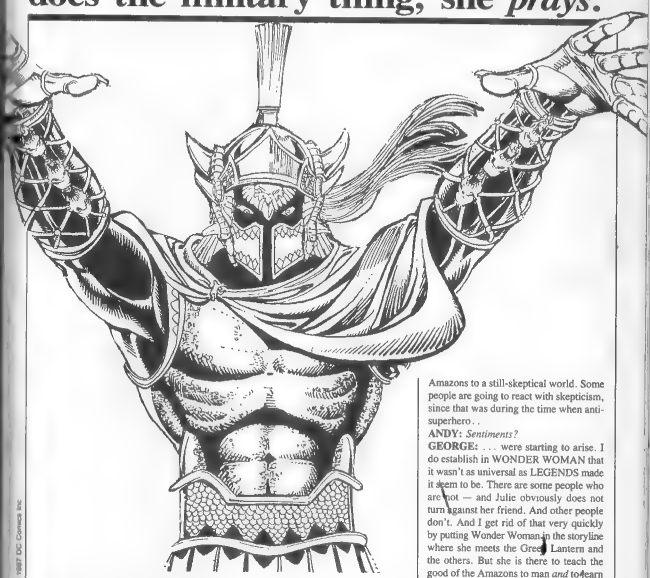
does the military thing, she *prays*."



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she initially thinks that she has been given this power by the gods so she can defeat Ares, and the gods could never give her that much power without making her a god. So, she does not beat Ares in a one-on-one fight. She cannot. And that was the one thing that made that ending unique, and I was proud of and the reaction was very favorable is that it kept a very strong internal logic to Wonder Woman. I did not grab powers out of a hat, I did not suddenly concentrate so much on making her look good that it jeopardized the actual essence of what I wanted to do with the character.

In her defeat was the actual victory. She learned from that — might does not necessarily make right — and that's something she'll always be professing. It is the reason why she's not and will never be a member of the Justice League. In LEGENDS she was asked and she turned it down — as explained in issue #8, she cannot join an organization that seems to be there solely because they want to fight crime. They're looking for crime. She's out there trying to prevent crime from ever happening . . . trying to teach love, trying to teach respect for each other . . . being a member of the Justice League is not her idea of what her mission is on this planet.

ANDY: *What is going to be her motivation after the Ares saga? Why does she stay in man's world?*

GEORGE: After the Ares storyline, her reason to go back is, when last we left poor Vanessa, she was still detained . . . she has to go back to save Vanessa. And in so doing, she tries to spread some of the knowledge and teachings of the Amazons to a still-skeptical world. Some people are going to react with skepticism, since that was during the time when anti-superhero . . .

ANDY: *Sentiments?*

GEORGE: . . . were starting to arise. I do establish in WONDER WOMAN that it wasn't as universal as LEGENDS made it seem to be. There are some people who are not — and Julie obviously does not turn against her friend. And other people don't. And I get rid of that very quickly by putting Wonder Woman in the storyline where she meets the Green Lantern and the others. But she is there to teach the good of the Amazons to man *and to* learn and teach the good of man to the Amazons. The Amazons are obviously very narrow-minded and prejudiced against man because of what had happened to them many centuries ago. But Diana, having never experienced that, is the ideal person to be openminded. So she's there as an ambassador, more than anything else. She's not there as a crimefighter, and that's the main essence of Wonder Woman.

Also, one thing I'm having a good time with is, again considering the name of the series, introducing a large army of interesting female characters and making them definitely individualistic. Julia has gotten a lot of good comments; I'm very proud of that. Vanessa, they like to see, does come off sounding like a regular young girl, pre-teen. And there's a new character coming out, by the time of this

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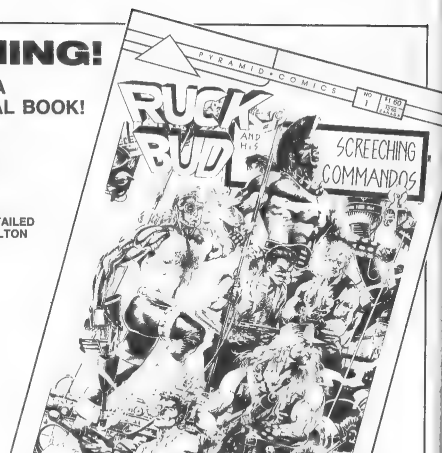

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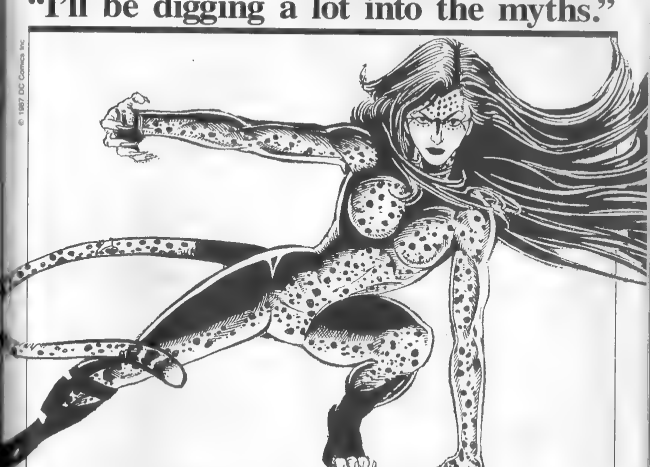
"I'll be digging a lot into the myths."



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nterview, Myndi Mayer, who is Diana's publicist; she needs someone to spread the news... Diana can't be everywhere. It's a good feeling. I like working with characters as characters. And of course Etta Candy, I can't forget her. That's the thing I'm proudest of — making interesting female characters in the book.

ANDY: *Speaking again of the Amazons, what happened to Antiope's Amazons? Are we ever going to see them again?*

GEORGE: Oh, yes. That will be referred to in issue #10 through #13, the "Trial of the Gods" issues. As far as Antiope, I did not deviate very much from what actually occurred in mythology. What happened to Antiope, supposedly, is that she made it with Theseus, who is the man who went with Heracles to trap the Amazons, bore his child, Hippolyte, named after her sister, and was killed by Theseus', I believe it's a jealous wife or lover, I can't remember. I wanted to build up the irony, which shouldn't escape anyone, that Antiope — who had this anger and fear of man — ends up being killed by a woman, anyway. And that will be something Hippolyte does not know happened to her sister. When she finds out, that irony is not going to be lost on her.

ANDY: *Are you going to be bringing back any of the other classic WONDER WOMAN villains?*

GEORGE: I think the Cheetah is one because, visually, she's a good character, and she's basically the premier female feline character — the woman who's basically half-woman, half-cat, the way Cheshire is, the way other characters... Vixen is. But the Cheetah was first. It just seems right to use her; basically, she's the only one I thought was interesting enough. The others, in the new WONDER WOMAN canon, just don't seem to work. I'll probably be designing more characters. And I'll probably be digging a lot into the myths, to utilize characters.

ANDY: *A couple of simple questions here: Where'd you get the exterior inspiration for Mt. Olympus? It's obvious the interior came from M.C. Escher...*

GEORGE: Basically, I just had the idea that they would be carved out of statues. As if they were carved out of the face of the gods themselves. The Escher thing became much more apparent in issue #7, where I decided these were *gods*, they don't have to work under the same rules men do... so they *can* walk on an Escher drawing, basically, with absolutely no problem whatsoever. When Olympus is reborn in issue #7, it's much more visually chaotic than it has been heretofore, because with the M.S. Escher ideas almost secondary, I've gone more berserk, to visually separate Olympus from Paradise Island.

ANDY: *Has Bruce Patterson said anything when he's gotten those pages to ink?*

GEORGE: No, Bruce never calls me. He takes it all very professionally. He does his work, he does everything that's there, and when you get down to it, that's an incredibly valuable thing to have in an inker. So far he has not sent hit men or anything.

ANDY: *Are you pleased with his inking style?*

GEORGE: Yes. I just wish that I had better grasp of my deadlines so I didn't have to rush him as much as I sometimes do. In spite of that, he does a fine job. He probably would do even better if given more time. Unfortunately, that's something I don't seem to be granting him too much.

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"John Byrne and I will co-plot ACTION #600."

I think he's doing a fantastic job.

ANDY: *Can you give us any clue as to who the original Diana was, or where the gun came from?*

GEORGE: No.

ANDY: *No clues?*

GEORGE: No.

ANDY: *Well, will Wonder Woman continue to wear her armor?*

GEORGE: Part of her armor is the costume she wears; she has to wear that. Full armor she would wear only on occasions when she's going into major battles. She's wearing that initially for the "God's Trial" sequence. I also, in issue #7, had introduced a casual outfit which she wears, which basically looks like what the original Wonder Girl costume was, with a loose tunic and a golden eagle on it. And, instead of the star-spangled trunks, she actually wears a skirt similar to the original skirt that Wonder Woman wore when she was introduced. With lace sandals. So she does have a variation on her costume. She has three versions of her costume: the standard costume, the armor that goes over that, and the casualwear she wears on Paradise Island.

ANDY: *Who is the character in issue #4 that gave Wonder Woman her name? I've heard there's a story behind that...*

GEORGE: Interestingly enough, when Len wrote the script he changed the name I wanted to put in there. He changed it to Carol Bennett, which might or might not have been a take-off on **Carol Burnett's** name. But that's not the name I put in. Originally, it was Janet Kane, or something similar to that... it was an inside joke on **Jenette Kahn** who came up with the idea of the double-W design instead of the two words. Now I'll have to explain the double-W design, because Diana could not have spoken English since she'd just gotten there, so why is she wearing that? And this character is the one who decides that that *is* a double-W as opposed to a stylized bird — which is what it actually is, with different origins — but that will all be explained in the storyline starting in issue #10. Originally, it was just an inside joke.

ANDY: *Blame Jenette for the double-W's.*

GEORGE: Yes... we're stuck with the double-W. It was an unpopular decision when it was originally done... everyone likes the bird, the eagle on the breastplate, so none of us liked it. And the double-W, when not drawn correctly tends to flatten the character out. That's one of the things I couldn't change in Wonder Woman's costume, they'd spent too much money trying to trademark that. So, fine, I played with that, but unfortunately changing the name took away the inside joke aspect.

ANDY: *Other than the fact that she looks exactly like Jenette Kahn...*

GEORGE: Well, it doesn't look *exactly* like her; I didn't use a photograph or anything, but the short hairstyle, the brown hair, it was definitely meant to be a **Jenette Kahn** type — so it's now a joke that anyone reading COMICS INTERVIEW would know, but it kind of got lost on most of the readership because of that change...

ANDY: *A couple of final questions on Wonder Woman, then: what's happening between Superman and Wonder Woman?*

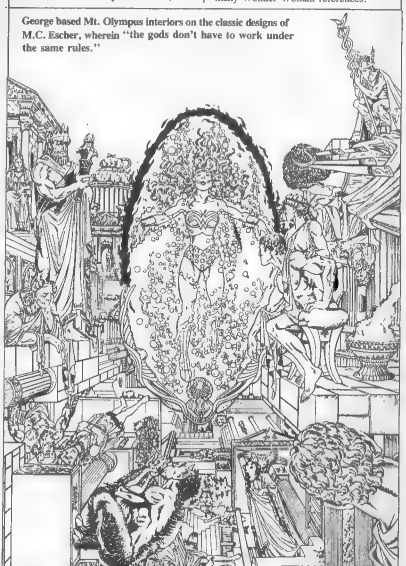
GEORGE: That's something **John Byrne** and I will be working out for ACTION #600. It will be a first full-story collaboration between **John Byrne** and me, with both of us co-plotting. John will handle the final dialogue or, if the book is a long one, we may end up doing it in chapters, and I'd handle it where Wonder Woman takes the bulk of the story. At this moment, John is the one considered the final dialoguer, with him doing the layouts and me finishing and inking it.

ANDY: *Will we continue to see Superman dreaming about Wonder Woman, and so forth?*

GEORGE: That one shot was enough.

ANDY: *Superman's wet dream...*

GEORGE: Yeah! Superman appears in issue #7, really in issue #8 of WONDER WOMAN and that's about it. Until we actually do the official crossover, I've asked John not to get carried away with too many Wonder Woman references.



George based Mt. Olympus interiors on the classic designs of M.C. Escher, wherein "the gods don't have to work under the same rules."

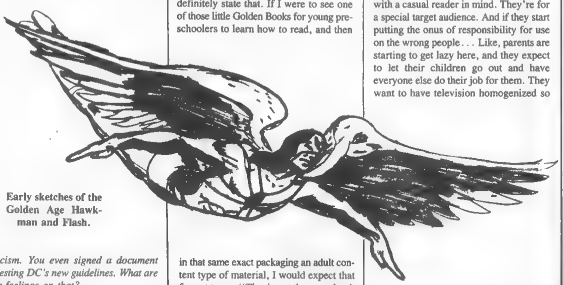
"Parents are starting to get lazy; they

ANDY: *A recent furor has erupted at DC, which has just instituted an in-house censorship plan that's received severe criticism. You even signed a document protesting DC's new guidelines. What are your feelings on that?*

GEORGE: Well, to clarify first, I didn't sign a document criticizing the guidelines. I criticized the guidelines being instituted without any consultation with the freelance creators who are responsible for producing the books.

ANDY: *Okay.*

GEORGE: That was my main gripe. There's a certain validity to truth in advertizing, that if we're producing a product that's different from what the product usually is — its assumed target audience, as in the case of a comic book which by its history is considered pulp disposable entertainment for children — that if you're doing something of a mature nature in that same format, it behooves the creators to definitely state that. If I were to see one of those little Golden Books for young preschoolers to learn how to read, and then in that same exact packaging an adult content type of material, I would expect that format to say "This is not the same book that you would suppose it is." There are certain warnings that I think are viable in that you are basically telling what you are doing.



Early sketches of the Golden Age Hawkman and Flash.

As far as it being channelled through some other arbitrary censor, I object to that, because there is no guideline that's gonna be discovered by a board or panel that's going to be good for everyone involved. If the creators feel that it's a mature theme, then it's up to them, the parent, or the retailer, whether they want to sell or buy the product based on their own convictions. But that shouldn't stop the product from being produced. They should just be aware of what their children are reading. If they want to protect their children, that's their resonsibility — but not to stop other people from producing the same subject matter for those who *want* to read such a thing.

The one thing that strikes me as ironic in this whole brouhaha is that a lot of the books that people are objecting to are the ones that by their very nature, their very design, are already out of the realm of looking like a standard comic book. I mean, ELEKTRA doesn't look like a comic book. WATCHMEN has the warning banner on it. It said "For Mature Readers." I believe it did. Maybe I'm speaking out of turn there.

ANDY: *I think later issues did.*

GEORGE: Okay. But even supposing that, it doesn't look like the standard comic book. More particularly are things like ELEKTRA, ASSASSIN, and DARK KNIGHT, which are so totally different in price and design that retailers themselves should realize that they are selling something that wasn't designed with a casual reader in mind. They're for a special target audience. And if they start putting the onus of responsibility for use on the wrong people . . . Like, parents are starting to get lazy here, and they expect to let their children go out and have everyone else do their job for them. They want to have television homogenized so that it doesn't offend anyone, and then it neither offends nor enlightens, and in some cases *offends the enlightened!*

Censorship is a very tricky, volatile issue, and I totally understand the parents' need to censor, but they are the only ones who can censor for themselves. Everyone else is his own censor. If I don't like a book because it offends me, I don't pick up the book anymore. I don't buy it. I don't force somebody else not to buy it, and I don't force a creator not to print it. It's their right to produce a book, it's my right not to buy it. If the majority opinion is on the buyer's side, that everyone is offended by the book, then everyone doesn't buy it and, of course, financially the publisher and the artist find that there's no commercial reason to print the book, and it's their option not to print it because it's a failure.

I am more offended by a comic that's done to offend no one, but done badly — as are most Saturday morning television shows *(Laughter.)* — than I am by a magazine that's done well but strike my sensibilities, either pro or con. There's some stuff in comics that I find *bothers* me; it doesn't *offend* me, I don't offend easily. But, you know, it gets me a little angry . . . and it's my right to turn it off, or, to try to find the creator's intent.

I think DC made a big mistake in knuckling down to outside pressures when these outside pressures have their own responsibility to sell the books. You're not responsible for how they run their stores, nor should they be responsible for how we

want to have television homogenized."

Conventional behavior: John Byrne, George, and Ralph Macchio, circa '78

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"I think DC made a big mistake in knuckling down to outside pressures."

produce our product. If they don't want to sell our product, they don't have to sell our product. But to say on one hand that they want comics to grow, as an art form more than just for children, and then on the other hand wanting to control what product that is . . . if they want to produce the stuff, let them be publishers! Then they have the right to publish what they want. But they have no right to tell other publishers what they want.

ANDY: *Do you think censorship from outside the comics community is a real threat?*

GEORGE: I don't know. I think it can be; I think we can allow it to be. Censorship, like almost everything, swings according to the political times. We've swung the pendulum back and forth so many times that we live in a revolving door society. When we lean toward a conservative right, politically, in the United States, that's usually the time when all the quacks come out of the woodwork, when people start using religion as a weapon as opposed to a comfort, when they start using political narrowmindedness as a means of supposed strength with their patriotism and such. It's just so much of an exercise in futility, trying to judge how severe this is going to be, as opposed to finding the rational way.

If everyone is an intelligent person, what is the intelligent compromise? The intelligent option? Unfortunately, when people start screaming at either end, no one is paying attention to any positive aspects of the other person's argument. To me, the one thing that's undebatable is that if we are a democracy, we have the right — each of us — to have our individual views, and to express our individual views. Those who oppose it do not have to agree, but they have no right to silence that other person.

If the company starts listening to other people's opinions of what they should publish, as opposed to following their own judgement of what they should publish based on marketability — which is a sound factor; I mean, we *are* a capitalist society — and what they believe a good story and good intent are, and the artistic merits of same, if outside forces are now dictating that, then they should no longer be publishers. Then we know that the people who own the stores are the publishers, and we might as well admit that. I don't think anyone is ready to admit such foolishness.

But there's no way that I think this will be as major a problem if the companies show some backbone. I think the companies, themselves, will make it a bigger problem than it is. From past experience, this is so *temporary* in society; it's like the latest fad. If the ultra-conservatives end up leaving office and the ultra-left ends up taking over, then of course then you have the other extreme, where suddenly you can print anything inflammatory, and say, "Hey, we have freedom of the press too!" I think **Frank Miller** and **Alan Moore** and anyone else who are primarily involved in this tempest in a teapot here, they all have shown, as far as I can see, good judgement in what they do. They obviously have certain convictions, and they produce it well. I tend to say that I don't think it's big; I certainly *hope* it's no big deal . . . I think the company panicked, and that's what's gonna make it big, if they're not careful.

ANDY: *What do you think should be done?*

GEORGE: I don't know. It's not an easy issue. For my own belief, I totally admit to being more liberal-minded. I believe that the publishers should be allowed to print what they wish, and the stores should be allowed to say "I will sell this" or "I

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#6

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"I think the company panicked."

won't sell this." They may even say "I don't want to sell this, but the book is a big back-issue seller, so I *will* sell it." then that's hypocrisy.

ANDY: *What about labelling?*

GEORGE: To me, labelling should be limited only to, if the package is already by its sheer history something other than what the current content is. If I'm going to be selling a toy gun — I'm not fond of toy weapons, either way — and in the same type of store there is a place where I'm selling *real* guns, then of course I would want labels that say "this gun is real," "this gun is not." They should be aware that two things that look alike may not necessarily be alike.

We do not publish child-oriented books very often in the Baxter format, from what I gather. But when you're doing a comic like SWAMP THING, which does have a mature reader banner, that I can understand — because a discerning parent will have no way of knowing. But if the packaging *doesn't* look like a standard comic, the problem is that the parents should be aware of what the comics look like. They are all making the assumption that all the comics look the same. I mean, the *parents* are in dire need of an education as to what the business of comics is these days! They all have the same, very narrow, idea of what comics are that has been popularized by the media — how many times do you see these old movies, you show how dumb a person is, you show him reading a comic book, to show that he's still very child-like in his attitude and he's educationally retarded. That image has to be fought. Things like DARK KNIGHT, ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN, WATCHMEN — I point to those in particular — have done a lot to do that. But they are not like the standard comics. They don't look like them, and of course the content inside shows that it is targeted for a different audience. But because of that, I think they've *already* labelled themselves.

ANDY: *Let me put this question on a more personal level. If you decided in an issue of WONDER WOMAN that you wanted to have something graphic, whether it be nudity or language or a very strong adult theme — not necessarily sex or violence, which most people associate with the words "adult" — but if you decided to do that in an issue of WONDER WOMAN, would you want that issue to be labelled or how would you feel about that?*

GEORGE: I would not put anything into a book of WONDER WOMAN that I don't feel a child *could* read. "Mature" is a very subjective case; there are children who are more mature than other children. In the case of WONDER WOMAN, I think I would have to put, for the sake of responsibility, some kind of message . . . not necessarily a label, but for the dealers to know that this is going to be a special case, and that they themselves should exercise caution.

I guess in handling WONDER WOMAN there's been some scenes that I've done which, because of the nature of the book that I'm doing — the fact that I'm doing a standard comic book with a well-established superheroine — I've done certain bits of my own censoring. I showed a decapitation, yet I showed it totally in shadow, because I'm aware of where I am.

If there were such a story that I felt was wrong, that I felt was going beyond the bounds of what ordinarily the book would have, and after an editorial discussion I got the go-ahead, I think the book in that case probably would have a mature label. But the one thing that I would express is

Starfire convention sketch, 1983.

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"If you don't believe in it, don't sell it."

the fact that dealers should not be scared off by a "mature" label. If a person then never gets the chance to read the book, I don't know if the dealer is actually serving his function.

ANDY: *Right.*

GEORGE: If I label a book, as a concession to them, what's to stop them from saying "but this is a regular comic book; we don't want you to start doing this type of story in a regular comic, because it affects sales on a continuing line which we don't want to screw up our economics."

ANDY: *Okay...*

GEORGE: Then suddenly it's just the fact that my warning them is now affecting another economic factor which is more their greed showing than their concern for the morality of our young people.

ANDY: *Right. It seems sort of hypocritical that Buddy Saunders, for instance, still sells the WATCHMEN and ELEKTRA at the same time he's asking publishers not to publish them.*

GEORGE: I can't speak for Buddy — I know Buddy from a few years back — I have no idea whether he actually sells these kinds of things or what kind of warning he gives. But using any retailer as an ambiguous example, as an overall example — if you don't believe in it, you don't sell it. If you're selling it anyway, then you're a hypocrite. If I'm going to be drawing a story that I believe is necessary to be done, and I have to produce a watered-down version of it, then I may as well not do the story — or then *I'd* be a hypocrite. And I'm not going to be a hypocrite if the story deserves an adult approach because it's an adult theme, and there's no way around it. It is my option, it is my *duty*, to make it as well-balanced, as truthful an account as possible, and let the *reader* judge its merits. And if the retailer doesn't want to sell it, that's his option. He owns the store. But whoever wants to read it should have the option to read it; if they want to go to another store that's something the dealer will have to deal with. "Okay, I live by my principles; if they want to buy this comic let them buy it at another store." If they don't want to lose that particular customer, and still want to sell the book, they have to live with that, too. It's a decision that everyone has to make on an individual basis. We are all our own censors, but we can't censor someone else

ANDY: *One of the main people behind the anti-censorship brigade is your ex-partner, Marv Wolfman. He's recently stated that after his contract is up he will no longer work for DC and as a result he's been fired as an editor. How did that news affect you?*

Unpublished Daredevil sketch.

GEORGE: Him being fired as an editor, knowing the company line, didn't surprise me. If I had were working as an editor, and said the things I said now about the company's policies, including that thing I signed protesting not being advised, I would understand their firing me as editor. I mean, if I'm not going to follow the company line, why call myself a company man? I think Marv might have been a little optimistic about DC's reaction...

I think DC is knuckling under a lot of pressure, but I think now they may be starting to have second thoughts. I mean, you don't start doing things wherein you're en-

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"But we can't censor someone else."

July 1977, Meadowcon, in New Jersey.

dangering yourself by losing a lot of major creative personnel. I'm on contract with the company until 1989, so I have no place I'm going to go. I can state the same protest Marv did, but that doesn't really do much 'cause I'm exclusively bound to them for at least two years — I'm still doing work for them. Whatever contract with them he had, he's still going to finish. It's just that as editor, you are part of DC's staff, as opposed to being a freelancer. As freelancers, we can say whatever we want. We're not part of the company, technically. I'm an "exclusive" freelancer, that just means I don't do any work for anyone else. I'm not bound to the company by editorial commitment.

You know, I'm all for what Marv said, and I understand why DC did it; it's a very sensitive time. Protests within their ranks is one thing — protest within their ranks that's *published* is something that they don't abide by, and it's their option as boss, really. Whatever they will. Marv took a stand, and Marv lives by his stand, and I respect him for that.

If DC has to get a firm hold of their policies right now. They want to do the impossible, basically . . . where you want to please everybody, and you end up pleasing nobody. So they have to define a compromise and this edict that they have with the new guidelines was not it. *(Laughter.)* I think they'll have to try something else, because there's no way they're going to have one blanket policy that's going to please creative people — particularly the more controversial creative people — and the more conservative retailers and protestors. There's no blanket law that's going to be good for New York and for Ohio. DC jumped the gun, I think. It was a shame; it wasn't a smart move. And it wasn't a well thought out move. But I think it's something that DC should be able to rise above, as long as cooler heads prevail

ANDY: *If Marv does leave after his contract is up for DC, how will this affect future projects between the two of you?*

GEORGE: That I don't even consider. It's something I can't make any decision about until I know the facts. If I were to die tomorrow, how will that affect sales? Since I'm not dead yet, it'd be a moot point. *(Laughter.)* At this point I can't speak for Marv. Any future projects? We haven't come up with one anyway! *(Laughter.)* It's a moot point.

ANDY: *A final question on Marv considering how much stake you have in the TEEN TITANS — and we talked about this months ago during our initial part of the interview, do you think his writing has been acceptable for the TEEN TITANS in the last eight months or so? How do you feel about his basically sort of deserting the book?*

GEORGE: I have not read the TITANS in over a year now. And not because of the fact that I'm appalled by the writing, or have any feeling one way or the other. I have not read almost any comic in the past year, with the possible exception of some of the special ones, like DARK KNIGHT and WATCHMEN, which I read religiously. Beyond that I don't read too many comics . . . partly because I don't have the time, and I have the tendency of not wanting my free time eaten up by comic books, as my work time is. I know that the sales of TITANS aren't what they were. I also know that Marv's been under a lot of pressure to live up to the old glory days, plus the fact that he was responsible for a lot of major projects like CRISIS

"Marv's been under a lot of pressure

and HISTORY and the new SUPERMAN, in addition to his TITANS work. Marv admits that there are a number of issues he didn't particularly care for. Beyond specifics, I know there are a lot of TITANS fans who protested, but the book is still selling well by Baxter comics standards, although not as well as it used to in the days of old when he and I were still working together on the TITANS. But, like, I have no opinion, positive or negative, about Marv's writing, out of the sheer fact that I haven't read it! *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *A little bit ago you mentioned your exclusive contract with DC. Can you explain what an exclusive contract is, and what it means to you?*

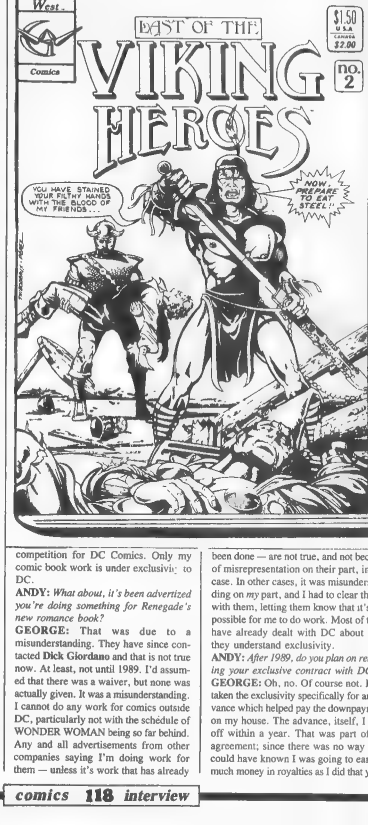
GEORGE: My exclusive contract is that I am contractually bound that I do all my comic book work for DC Comics; I don't work for Marvel, I don't work for independents. The only exclusion I had from that was stuff I had done for **Singer** at Deluxe because his contract pre-dated DC's contract by a couple of weeks, and DC waivered it in order for me to sign their contract. And inking one cover that I did for **Michael Thibodeaux** for THE LAST OF THE VIKING HEROS, which I did a couple of years ago.

ANDY: *The 1984 San Diego Comicon, I saw you inking it!*

GEORGE: Yes, that was some time ago! It's a five year contract... 1984, that's exactly five years ago! So, that also predated the contract. And anything that's done as a charity thing, DC themselves puts a waiver for — I did the cover for ANYTHING GOES *#4* or *#5*, and since that was strictly as a charity item, DC waived the exclusivity right. It's DC's option to waive based on my deadlines and based on their desire to have **Perez** on the market strictly as a DC performer. They can say that "**George Perez** is a DC artist," like I am part of the company, part of their regular stable of workers.

ANDY: *That also covers COMICS INTERVIEW, or AMAZING HEROES, and so forth...?*

GEORGE: No, because those are not in direct competition with DC. It's not comic book work, it's comic-book related, and they consider it publicity. So if I'm publicizing the work I'm doing for DC, they're glad of that — as long as it doesn't affect my schedule on their books. That's totally different, anything done outside of the comic medium. If I was doing work as an illustrator — let's say if I did something for NATIONAL LAMPOON, or PLAYBOY, or anything else — I'm allowed that, because that's not direct competition for DC Comics. Only my comic book work is under exclusivity to DC.



ANDY: *What about, it's been advertized you're doing something for Renegade's new romance book?*

GEORGE: That was due to a misunderstanding. They have since contacted **Dick Giordano** and that is not true now. At least, not until 1989. I'd assumed that there was a waiver, but none was actually given. It was a misunderstanding. I cannot do any work for comics outside DC, particularly not with the schedule of WONDER WOMAN being so far behind. Any and all advertisements from other companies saying I'm doing work for them — unless it's work that has already been done — are not true, and not because of misrepresentation on their part, in this case. In other cases, it was misunderstanding on *my* part, and I had to clear the air with them, letting them know that it's impossible for me to do work. Most of them have already dealt with DC about that; they understand exclusivity.

ANDY: *After 1989, do you plan on renewing your exclusive contract with DC?*

GEORGE: Oh, no. Of course not. I had taken the exclusivity specifically for an advance which helped pay the downpayment on my house. The advance, itself, I paid off within a year. That was part of the agreement; since there was no way they could have known I was going to earn as much money in royalties as I did that year.

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to live up to the old glory days."

Cover art for ANYTHING GOES #5, published by and available from Fantagraphics.

they had to give a rational, reasonable amount of time for a debt of that size to be paid, so five years was the agreed upon time. It's one of the longest exclusive contracts the company has ever given. As it turned out, the money they advanced me was paid off that first year, but I'm still duty bound to stay on until June of 1989. And that's fine. That's what I agreed to, they came through when I needed them, and now I hope to come through as they need me.

ANDY: *As far as future projects, I understand you've been approached about writing a series next year?*

GEORGE: Yeah, well, Karen talked about having me write WONDER WOMAN when the time starts getting a little better for it, particularly if I go to breakdowns on the book instead of full pencils, because I can't maintain that schedule anymore. And Len has other projects, he plans to be moving on; Len basically came in to help out with the knowledge that, since I do have the writing bug, eventually I'll want to write the series myself. Len's doing a hell of a job to keep the thing going. He's also very good at putting my intent on paper; he's a good wordsmith, and that's something I have to work on, which is the reason I need time and Len doesn't — Len has a more instinctive handle on this. But yes, I want to do some more writing as well, but primarily I want to draw more complete work. I want to do more inking on my own, or on other people, because I like the finished look.

I enjoy the finished look of my work when it's inked by me, not because I'm the best inker in the world or anything, but I have a certain style that I like. I've been doing storytelling for quite awhile, so that's second nature. I want to illustrate more, to have the final look be mine. When I inked **Curt Swan** for SUPERMAN, on his last issue, I really, really loved doing that! So I want to do more... even if it's inking someone else on a regular basis for awhile. I've spoken to **John Byrne** about the possibility of inking him; I definitely will be inking him on ACTION COMICS #600, where Superman and Wonder Woman will meet in a story about twenty-five pages long (there'll be more than one story in that issue, since it's an anniversary issue).

ANDY: *It is going to be #600?*

GEORGE: Yeah. It could change again before this gets printed, but the idea is for it to be an anniversary issue of ACTION, since this will be the 50th anniversary of ACTION when you figure twelve times fifty is six hundred... even though it did suspend publication for a couple of months. The lead story will be the Superman/Wonder Woman team-up, done by John and myself, and then a series of smaller, five-to-ten page stories showing Superman teaming up with other characters, done by other artists, including John. I believe **Steve Rude** is doing a **Max Fleischer** tribute, with a cartoon that was never made, where Superman meets a **Max Fleischer**-type Bat Man. **Steve Rude** will be drawing it. **John Byrne** wants to do a Superman short with ANGEL AND THE APE, he'll have to get **Bob Oksner** for that... and whatever comes up. It's still in the planning stages. We are talking about a book that's still a year away. But the Superman/Wonder Woman will be the chief story. We hope to get together next month and work out the plot, with him playing the Superman part and me doing Wonder Woman as we bandy it back and forth, and somewhere along that story to switch roles for ourselves, where I'm pencilling and he's inking for awhile. Just so John can ink a **Perez** Superman. That should be fun! I've also asked — if my schedule permits, I'd love to do it — since last I heard from **Dick Giordano** he's leaving ACTION, that if they don't have a regular inker, I'd be inking **John Byrne** on ACTION COMICS on a regular basis.

ANDY: *Hmmm.*

GEORGE: That's after I go breakdowns on WONDER WOMAN. I can't ink myself on a regular basis. I put a lot more work into my own work. And also if I'm inking myself, I feel that I can keep adding and adding and drawing more things in there. In my work, I can put as much

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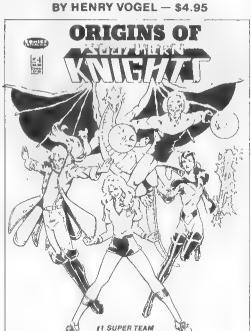

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"• It's been a while since I've recommended *Southern Knights* (Comics Interview, $1.75 each) but my enthusiasm for it has not waned. I haven't a lot of space and time to spare, so let me just reiterate that this is a super-hero team based in Atlanta, the writing is by the extremely able Henry Vogel and the very good art is by Willie Peppers, and that the outstanding member of this team is Dragon. Dragon is not a man who can turn into a dragon; he is a dragon who masquerades as a man. Check out this series, please. For the earliest issues, you will probably have to settle for *Early Days of the Southern Knights*, a series of graphic-album reprints, since the very earliest issues of *SK* are hard, if not impossible, to locate."

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COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

"I don't know what Alan Moore's situation is."

Never before seen JLA/AVENGERS art here and next two pages!

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as I want to, 'cause I'm in charge of the entire structure of it. But if it works out and I do end up inking John, it will be a lot of fun. John's style is similar and dissimilar to mine; he does breakdowns on that book, so it gives me a little more freedom for the Perez touches. And, let's face it, I can also earn a good deal of change on it. That would basically help bide time until the graphic novel comes along. Originally, I definitely wanted to work on a graphic novel with, like, **Alan Moore**, but I don't know what **Alan Moore's** situation is, because of the great labelling debate — whether he'd be doing any more work for DC by that point. But I really want to do more stuff like posters and illustrations, that I can pencil and ink myself, do a little more freelancing inking on other people. John is one person I'd love to work with more; John and I have been in the business almost the same amount of time and have very parallel careers in some ways. But there are other people, some I regret now I'm no longer capable of inking . . . for instance **Wayne Boring**, who has passed on.

But, I want to be able to do more *finished* **Perez** work. With all due respect to any and all inkers who work on me or will work on me — there's a greater feeling of satisfaction when the work is totally yours.

ANDY: *Is there a possibility you'd work a major crossover book like CRISIS again?*

GEORGE: I have been asked about the possibility of plotting or maybe scripting a crossover book to follow for 1988. I don't know yet. It would be a challenge. I would like to try a different avenue of working, and try to make it easier for all the creators that would tie in to that type of story. Say, keep it as six issues at the maximum. But also try to see if I can actually take *their* storylines and work them into the crossover book — as opposed to them having to come up with storylines that will match mine! I mean, I've been doing that for my career, where if something didn't make sense, I had to work it out, anyway. And I find that a challenge.

The bad thing about these crossover books is there's a constant need to stop

"And, you know, that's the nature of

a storyline short on an existing series so they can do a crossover, and I can understand that being unfair. I mean, I'm doing a storyline with Wonder Woman that will work into MILLENIUM as well, but that was something that Steve and I worked out a while back, and my being behind WONDER WOMAN kind gives me a chance to do it if I were ahead of schedule on WONDER WOMAN, that would be a hard thing to do, since that means I'd have to stop in mid-stride in order to compensate for the crossover.

I can understand that is becoming a bit of a burden to a lot of creators, now that this is a yearly thing. It's like, every year they have to have a Justice League and Justice Society crossover, so of course the ideas started running dry. The creators can only do so much, without feeling they're compromising their characters. And if I do end up doing the book, I'd have to find a way to appease them, 'cause this would be the fourth crossover book in a row; that's four times in four years that they've done a story that — no matter whether you've started a storyline in your own book — suddenly you have to deal with. Every twelve issues, you've got to do a story dealing with somebody's else's creation.

I can understand a creator being a little ticked off by that, and I'd try to find a way of making a healthy compromise.

But again, that supposes I do the thing. I may end up doing layouts as well — knowing me, I would end up doing a book that would be a bit more of a "how many guys can I fit into this panel" book. *(Laughter.)* Not many other artists are going to be as willing to volunteer for that. I've always commended Dick and Jerry for sticking on CRISIS, particularly Jerry for sticking the longest, because I did not make it easier; it got crazier as I went along, the more characters that were introduced, the more that got drawn in, and Jerry ended up with the brunt of that from the very first issue with that double-pager. And, you know, that's the nature of the beast when it comes to **Perez** art.

ANDY: *If you do a series, who do you think you might want to illustrate it?*

GEORGE: If it's not me, I haven't the faintest idea. Only because it depends on schedules . . . I mean, I love **John Byrne's** work, **Jerry Ordway's** work, I love **Brian Bolland**, although I don't want to work with him because the book would come out five years after the fact. *(Laughter.)* There are a lot of artists I enjoy immensely. Whether they'd be interested in doing a book like that is up to them. Very few artists really want to work on a book like that anymore. After CRISIS and after LEGENDS, the novelty is gone. Now it's becoming a standard type of book that, if it's really well done, can be fine — but it's no longer the event it used to be in my mind, anyway. I don't know how DC is managing with any artists of choice there, because a number of others are way too busy to do a book like that, which is by its very nature a harder book to draw. I would have earned more money, staying on the TEEN TITANS by a substantial margin; I would have earned two to three times more money staying on the TEEN TITANS than I earned doing CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS. And I was doing a lot less work on the TEEN TITANS. It's just like, CRISIS was a hard book to draw. When John did LEGENDS, he did it with fewer characters. He's no fool. I was the one who put in all the characters in CRISIS; it wasn't Marv saying, "George, we need to draw a million characters." Marv was saying, "Take it easy." I made it hard on myself! *(Laughter.)* But I haven't the faintest idea who I would get to draw, and then not feel guilty every time I'd write in, "Okay, now the Legion of Superheros meet every JLA member who ever was, and the Justice Society in panel three." I would get a great feeling of guilt, something like, "Boy, I would love to draw this," but the artist may not share that enthusiasm. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY: *Do you have any TEEN TITANS plans upcoming?*

GEORGE: Not definite. I know I'd like to work on a graphic novel. I might even like to work on a couple of issues of the book. But that's all so dependent on Marv

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the beast when it comes to Perez art."

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and dependent on our respective schedules. One TEEN TITANS project I feel *has* to be done is a crossover with SPOTLIGHT where we deal with the current status of "Who the Hell is Donna Troy?" *(Laughter.)* Since that was my favorite TITANS story when I worked with Marv, and at least of the books that we worked out together that I believe was also Marv's favorite. But it's also now a tale that does not fit DC's current timeline. So we have to do another version of it and, of course, cross it over to WONDER WOMAN. That one, obviously I'd be co-plotting and drawing — and I'd be plotting and/or scripting, and definitely drawing, the WONDER WOMAN parts. The Wonder Girl chapter, as well, because Marv and I were responsible for the Wonder Girl origin to begin with. I couldn't give up the opportunity of working with Marv on fixing her up. That's the only one I feel is *definite*. As to when, I don't know. But that's a definite. I mean,

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more money staying on TEEN TITANS."

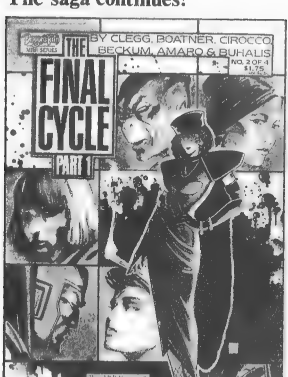
The absolute first TEEN TITANS sketch by George, from 1970.

the graphic novel, contracts have to be signed, and I have an open invitation as far as the TITANS themselves are concerned. And, financially, it wouldn't do me any harm to do the TITANS for a few issues. It's just "when?" — that's the biggest question.

ANDY: *Any other plans?*

GEORGE: Nothing concrete. A lot of stuff I'd like to do, but again, they're all dream things to do, and how any of them will be realistic is based on what my timetable is. Unfortunately, I'm nowhere near as fast as I used to be. Which I'm glad of, because I'm putting a lot more into my work than I used to. But it also means that I cannot do all the things I want. I don't have the time for it. Maybe writing, if I end up doing it, writing will be a nice avenue of escape. If I can't draw it, at least I have *some* feeling of respon-

The saga continues!



This issue contains the 12 page story "Long Night's Journey Into Day," illustrated by ***Frank Cirocco*** and Basilio Amaro, that concludes in the issue length story for #3. In it our young heroes travel to an amoral world where the only laws are the ones you yourself enforce. In one eventful night they become embroiled in a three-way power struggle.

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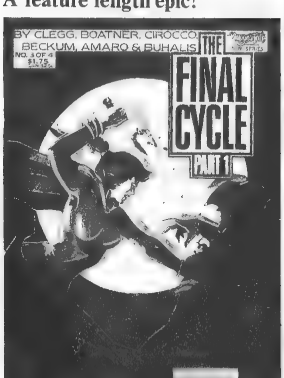

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"We survive as best we can and hope that we cram a little living into it."

sibility for the particular approach. But as an artist, I feel my options are limited by time.

ANDY: *Do you see a break coming up anywhere in the future?*

GEORGE: A what?

ANDY: *A break?*

GEORGE: I don't understand the question.

ANDY: *A vacation?*

GEORGE: Oh, that kind of break! I thought you meant a break as in an opportunity. Yeah, well, I have a timeshare in a few places in Mexico, so I'm probably going to hit that some time in October. After I do issue #13 of WONDER WOMAN, I have to — there's no way I could survive otherwise. Also, I'll do a few things with my wife; we're doing a cruise this summer, a bellydancing cruise — she's involved with that, and I will be with her. Plus, on weekends, we find as much time to go dancing as we can. We're going dancing tonight, and we were out dancing last night. That's an escape. As far as an extended vacation, probably October's going to be the earliest, my first real vacation in almost two years.

ANDY: *Are you going to be at the San Diego Con?*

GEORGE: I don't know. I was intending to, and my wife enjoys that show . . . it's just that, schedule-wise and financial-wise, I don't know if it's the smartest thing for me to do. With my schedule being what it is, DC may feel it would be much more beneficial for me to stay home and work on the book *(Laughter.)* and I probably might feel the same way. I, at least, want to fulfill my commitment on WONDER WOMAN, you know.

ANDY: *Right.*

GEORGE: We have a major storyline coming up, and we really have to work on that!

ANDY: *Well, here's an entirely personal question: Do you and Carol plan on having little Perezes to carry on the artistic tradition?*

GEORGE: No, we decided when we got married, with my schedule and by inclination, neither of us is in a position to be a parent. So we just decided some time back that we were not going to have any children. I don't have the time to spend on a child, and neither does she, and neither of us really felt like we wanted it. We have nieces and nephews, and we're content playing the happy uncle and aunt, but it was our own personal choice, and we have had no reason in closing on six years of marriage to regret that. I'm in my 30s; so is she. And the urge is definitely not there. That's important to me — if we don't feel that we want children, there's no reason to have them.

ANDY: *How long do you plan to keep drawing?*

GEORGE: Until I drop. I want to be like **Norman Rockwell**. When **Rockwell** died, he still had an unfinished picture on his drawing board.

ANDY: *As a dramatic finale, here we go — what are your hopes, dreams and, most importantly, your goals for the future of yourself, comics, or the world in general?*

GEORGE: Didn't we just cover all this in this conversation? *(Laughter.)* When you get down to it, that's what we talked about! That's all I have to say about it!

ANDY: *What do you hope for, for the world in general?*

GEORGE: That we survive. That's it, basically. In the long run, we survive as best as we can and hope that we cram a little living into it.

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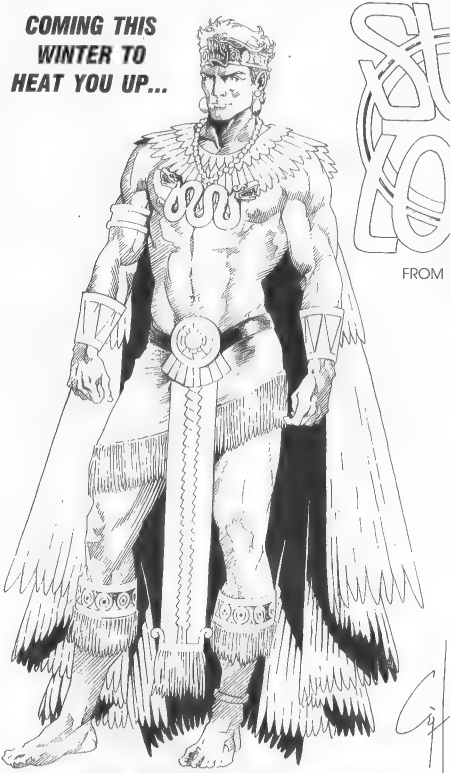

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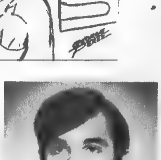

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"WITH YOUR IRRESPONSIBLE CREATION OF THE SYMBIONIC BI-BREED, YOU'VE TOTALLY ANNIHILATED THE INDIVIDUAL LIVES OF THE TERRAN, PHILLIP SIMON, AS WELL AS THE ETHEREAL DAKK."
"I HAVE NOTED SEVERE CONFLICTS IN THE IDS OF BOTH BEINGS. SIMON IS BECOMING PARANOI
"DO NOT INTERRUPT!"
"SIMON'S INTEREST IN THE FEMALE, LIZA MARNER, HAS FURTHERED HIS RESENTMENT FOR HIS PREDICAMENT."
"SOLPRIME AND MACINTOSH ARE EASILY DEALT WITH. THE SYMBIOD, HOWEVER, PRESENTS A PROBLEM!"
"YES. DAKK AND PHILLIP SIMON HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH IN A TOTALLY DIFFERENT MANNER..."
"...A MANNER KNOWN TO TAR-MYK ALL TOO WELL."
1987 Patel

Above: splash page for FACTORS UNKNOWN #4. "This story, 'No Apples for the Teacher,' was an aborted tale created by Jim Glenn, with Patrick Daniel O'Neill — who now works sometimes for COMICS INTERVIEW."

IN THE THIRD ISSUE OF "FACTORY/UNKNOWN" WE INTRODUCED THE UNIQUE DEATH SQUAD, CREATED BY GEORGE PEREZ. THE RESPONSE TO THE INTRODUCTORY TALE WAS EXTREMELY GRATIFYING SO AS TO INSPIRE PEREZ TO PRESENT THE EERIE ORIGIN TALE. THE CURRENT SQUAD CONSISTS OF FOUR MEMBERS -- THERE USED TO BE EIGHT. HOW IT ALL CAME TO BE WILL BE REVEALED IN THIS SHOCKER!
HORROR FANS! FANTASY FANS! SUPER-HERO FANS! SCI-FI FANS! THIS ONE'S FOR YOU!!
© 1987 Perez

"This was to be the splash of the second DEATH SQUAD story, I think. I believe I only got as far as this page. Sal Quartuccio gave me some valuable advice here — 'nix the flairs!' See, flairs fade! I was pretty satisfied with the woman's face, though. In fact, my current style of drawing women is actually closer to this than to most of the Marvel work I did, with bland faces."

"Trying to break into comics, I drew this page on Rich Buckler's advice. He said to put together a portfolio showing a variety of styles, not just superheroes. And to take it to DC, because I wasn't 'good enough for Marvel'! I had no concept of what the term 'reference material' meant. Never saw a picture of a horse. Needless to say, no one at DC was impressed."

Copyright © 1987 James Farmer

Star*Burst. An original character conceived by James Farmer and drawn by George Perez during his Marvel years (while he was doing FANTASTIC FOUR). Inked by Joe Sinnott.

"This story was rejected by Warren editor Bill Dubay. Probably the best thing that could've happened, since Warren was no fun to work for, by most accounts. But, along with his rejection, Dubay managed to praise me, by comparing it to Kubert and others."

© 1987 Perez

"I learned a lesson here — no comics company lives off their pin-ups! They want to see your *sequential* art — storytelling."

Bonus to the Bonus! This pin-up, inked by Bill Black (who also did this issue's cover separations) shows how George tackled the same composition somewhat more successfully a few years later, after he turned professional. (From HEROES, HEAVIES, AND HEROINES.)

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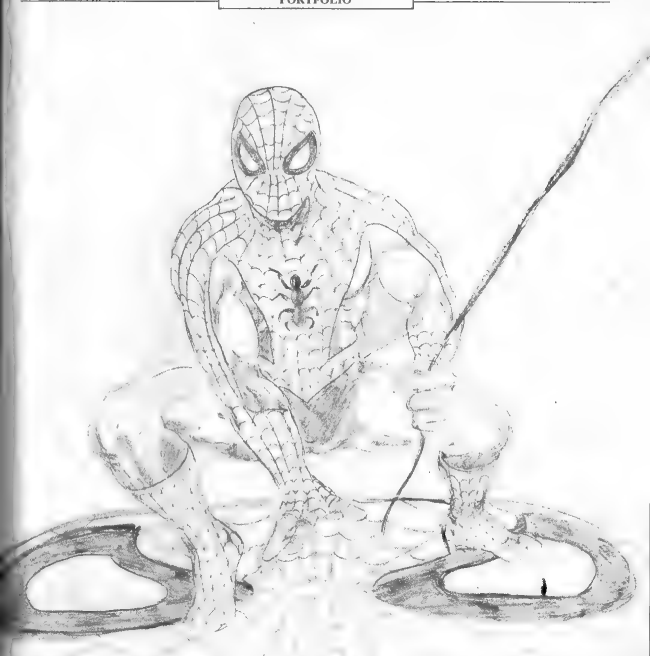
"Done for a portfolio to break into DC's junior bullpen. It didn't work — but I learned something here, too. Never apply for a job with one company by using another company's characters!"



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"Just like Ben Grimm — The Thing — there's a science to drawing Spider-Man. The costume — I didn't yet have it. It has to do with the webbing on the costume. I couldn't decide whether he should be more 'open-webbed' like Ditko's, or 'closed' like Johnny Romita's.

This one was too 'close-webbed.' Too many lines on the face. And the little horizontal connecting lines should be less curved — more like a checkerboard. Also, he was too chunky. In those days, Marvel wanted Romita, not Ditko. Today, they're looser."

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COMICS INTERVIEW

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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

MIGHTY MAPLE FELLED BY RATIONAL RESPONSE

(Or: Censorship? We don' need no stinkin' censorship!)

Dear David,

T.M. Maple has taken the position that some censorship may be a necessity, that this is perhaps even desirable, and in defense of this stance points to snuff films and child pornography as materials which should be censored. In short, he has presented us with two evils and asks that we choose the lesser, which would obviously be censorship. This I will readily admit. The First Amendment would be a hollow sham indeed were it to embrace snuff films and child pornography. If combatting murder and rape is censorship, then by all means let us have censorship

But I must reject T.M.'s arguments. In the first place I do not see what good could come of censoring these materials. I do not believe that murderers and rapists would submit their "art" to anyone for approval, and I equally doubt that lacking approval for their "art" would in any way impede their ability to create and share it. Furthermore, the suggestion that these materials could be approved is monstrous. This is why I said in my previous letter that they should be treated not as artforms deserving to be censored and restricted but as a crimes in need of obliteration. Maybe I could have said that in a better way, but I stand by those words. These materials are criminal, just as their creators are criminals, and that is the manner with which they should be dealt. (It makes no difference where these materials are created if they are criminal in and of themselves, T.M. — to answer your question in that regard.)

In the second place, if we were to establish laws censoring snuff films and/or child pornography (or anything whatsoever) what we would in fact be doing would be establishing a precedent of censorship, and in the law a precedent is cherished. If we did that then we might as well toss the First Amendment (or your country's equivalent) out the window in favor of freedom of censorship. Granted, you don't think this is what you're saying, but I see no other possible outcome. If one censorship law is passed, no matter how well intended, then it is a certainty that other censorship laws would follow, equally well intended perhaps. Eventually one of those laws would have to be challenged in the courts, and if it went all the way up to the highest court in the land and was condoned by that court, the First Amendment would be only so much ink on an old piece of paper. Memorize your favorite book quick, the firemen are coming! On the other hand the courts might (probably would) throw the law out, in which case we would end up back where we started. It would either be a crippling blow to our system of government and our way of life, or it would be a monumental waste of time. Pick the lesser of those two evils, T.M.

In the third place we do not have to have censorship in order to combat snuff films and child pornography. By no stretch of the imagination is it possible to say that the First Amendment condones either murder or rape, not even as acts of "freedom of expression." This actually is the heart of your problem, T.M., because you define censorship as "any restriction of freedom of expression for whatever reason." It has a good beat but you can't dance to it. By that definition, turning off the television would be an act of censorship, because "for whatever reason" we would be restricting someone's ability to communicate with us. Changing the channel would be an act of censorship. Not changing the channel would be an act of censorship. Any exercise of freedom of expression would be a form of censorship, in that a decision would somewhere be made as to what to say over what not to say, how to say it over how not to say it, when and where to say it over when and where not to say it, who to say it to over who not to say it to, and so on and so forth. Boy, we would be in big trouble if that was censorship — the precedents for it are all around us.

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Censorship may be many things, but that it is not. Censorship, in a legal sense (in this country), is actually "any restriction of the rights guaranteed in the First Amendment" — or, to put it another way, "any restriction of the right of freedom of expression." (Please note, in both definitions I have used the term "right" — and please further note that the word "of" is not the same as "on.") In point of fact, there are several restrictions on the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, but there are none of the rights guaranteed. The restrictions on the First Amendment have nothing whatsoever to do with censorship, whereas restrictions of the rights would be nothing other than censorship. (Let me here point out that I am not in any way an authority on the Constitution, these are simply my opinions of the facts as I see them.)

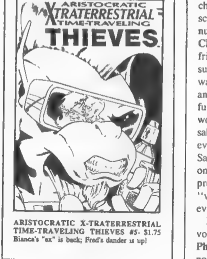
There are places at which the First Amendment ceases to function. That has a dangerous sound, but it's the truth. The First Amendment does not give us the right to slander or libel or yell "Fire!" in a crowded theater where there is no fire. There is no censorship involved in this. We are not censored of these acts since no right under the First Amendment exists in connection with these acts. They aren't covered, and a right cannot be restricted where it does not exist.

And when you talk about snuff films and child pornography, T.M., you talk of actual murder and actual rape being committed in the name of art. It is ludicrous to assume that the First Amendment would extend to cover those acts. We're not talking about a simulation as an act of art; not about covering horrible facts as news; not about exercising a right where it exists and where no violation of other rights can be shown (such as playing red shirts or wearing tiddlywinks as a function of freedom of expression); not even about that which is commonly called "pornography," whose creative participants are willing and consenting adults — we're talking about actually going out and committing terrible crimes as actions of a right. That's insane, T.M. It don't wash.

Darrel L. Boatz
3885 Camelot Circle #203
Decatur, IL 62526

LETTERS

"FRED SEES RED!"



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STARLOG SPEAKS

Dear DAK,

Some comments on COMICS INTERVIEW: I've really enjoyed the recent issues, especially the anti-censorship edition. The editorial about why the MPAA's rating system hasn't worked was excellent. The Writer (I don't have my copy in front of me) put into print many of the philosophies I've been personally supporting.

Buddy Saunders notwithstanding — and he can run his stores any way he likes — I don't think parents really use rating systems. If they did, there would never have been a PG-13 rating. PG meant "Parental Guidance suggested." In other words, "Mom, Dad, check this movie out. It may not be suitable for your kid — you'll have to decide." PG-13 only became necessary when parents thought they could send their children to PG movies without worrying because admission wasn't restricted.

PG put the responsibility to evaluate the movie in the parents' hands — where it should be. PG-13 was the result of parents rejecting that responsibility by saying, "RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK was rated PG. There *shouldn't* have been any snakes in that movie to give my kid nightmares."

I also take objection to **Bob Sodaro's** characterization of **Glenn Close's** shower scene in THE BIG CHILL as "gratuitous nudity" in the **John Byrne** interview. **Close** was playing a woman whose best friend and former lover had committed suicide. Among her group of friends, she was considered the strong one. (I believe another character even comments at the funeral, "Sarah is holding up amazingly well.") THE BIG CHILL is not a salacious or gratuitous film. Every line and every scene serve a particular purpose. Sarah cries in the shower because it is the only place she can be truly alone and express her sadness. She can only be "weak" and cry when she doesn't have everyone else relying on her.

Moreover, the nudity is hardly provocative or titillating. **Glenn Close** is not **Phoebe Cates**, and THE BIG CHILL is not PORKY's. I pity any person who got sexually aroused at the sight of **Close** sobbing while huddled in the corner of a running shower. Movies should not be edited with that kind of person's taste in mind.

Keep up the good work.

Carr d'Angelo
Managing Editor, STARLOG
Co-Editor, COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

Thanks for taking time from your own busy schedule to write, Carr — the author of that very effective editorial in #43 was none other than Stephen Bissette, known to many as artist and collaborator (with Alan Moore) on some fine issues of DC's SWAMP THING, and currently involved in the massive TABOO project being published by Dave Sim. Steve knows whereof he speaks when it comes to movies and the MPAA, so I was delighted that he stepped in to say it better than I would've been able. His editorial is the definitive statement on the subject. From COMICS INTERVIEW to STARLOG, here's wishing you well, Carr (and tell Kerry O'Quinn to keep up those excellent libertarian editorials of his own!).

— DAK

NEXT ISSUE: We were first to find 'em and talk to 'em back in our fifth issue, before polite comics society took them seriously — now it's Comico's fifth anniversary, and the crew returns triumphant to talk about things to come! Look for the M-M-MAX HEADROOM MEETS GRENDEL cover on the all new, all great COMICS INTERVIEW #51.

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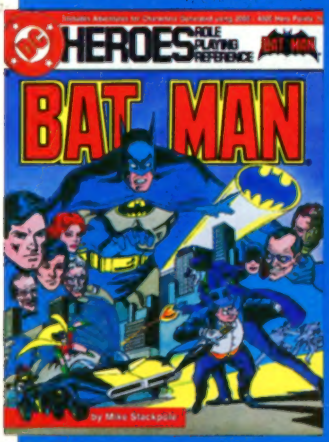

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